THE PRICE SHE PAID

AUTHOR OF

SAINT SIMON'S NIECE

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THE PRICE SHE PAID.

A NOVEL.

BY

FRANK LEE BENEDICT,
AUTHOR OF "SAINT SIMON'S NIECE," "MADAME," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

HENRY TESTARD, Esq.,

WITH MORE GOOD WISHES THAN WOULD FILL
THESE VOLUMES.

FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

June 1882.

THE PRICE SHE PAID.

CHAPTER I.

IT was only the first week in May, but the weather had suddenly turned so hot that Miss Grosvenor found New York insupportable, and longed sorely for the freshness and freedom of the country.

Aunt Conyngham wished her to go to their Newport Cottage under the housekeeper's charge, promising to follow herself in a short time, but Miss Grosvenor declined the proposal. Newport was not the country, besides, she did not want sea-air, it would only make her more restless and excited; she was pining for the mountains, and knew that she should gain strength as soon as she got among them, and never until then.

Her relative humoured the young lady's caprices, for Georgia was far from well. She had broken down just at the close of the season;

caught a severe cold, which ended in a nervous fever, and had been very poorly ever since. She could neither eat nor sleep, had lost flesh and spirits, and man interested her not, nor woman either.

"I am going to bits like an ill-made bundle, and those foolish doctors can't find the sort of string that would put me together again," she told her aunt in her whimsical fashion.

Said physicians had decided that nothing serious was the matter; her nerves were out of order; but Miss Grosvenor declared that doctors always fell back on this verdict when they did not know what ailed a patient, adding irreverently, that seven times out of ten they did not know, and were unable to do any good, if by chance they discovered.

She wanted "building up," change of air and complete repose—above all things, she was not to be thwarted or contradicted. Had Georgia heard this portion of the Esculapian dictum, she might have regarded her advisers with less scorn, but Aunt Conyngham wisely kept it to herself, though it rendered her so yielding that her niece could not recover from her astonishment.

It chanced that Mrs Conyngham's lawyer called at the house on the very day when the ladies were debating the Newport plan, and he was able to suggest a retreat, which seemed to Miss Grosvenor exactly what she desired, and had despaired of finding—a farm-house among the mountains of Pennsylvania. The lawyer knew

nothing personally about the spot or its owner, but an old friend of his, a clergyman, who resided in a town a few miles distant from the farm, had informed him that his client would find herself perfectly comfortable in case Miss French consented, as the reverend gentleman thought she might, to receive a guest for the summer.

Georgia wrote at once, mentioning the clergyman's name, so that through his medium Miss French could obtain information from the lawyer concerning her applicant, if she considered it necessary. Within two days there came an answer, addressed to "Miss G. G., care of Mrs Conyngham." Georgia perceived that she must have put only her initials to her own epistle, and was a little mortified that she had been forgetful enough to carry so far a foolish habit she had of employing them when writing to her friends or speaking of herself.

However, the response was favourable, and the chirography so prettily quaint, that Miss Grosvenor decided P. French, as the writer signed her letter, would prove a "character;" and anything out of the beaten track, whether as regarded nature or human beings, was always interesting.

"This is Saturday," said Miss Grosvenor, "I shall telegraph P. French that she may expect me on Tuesday; I can't write again. I am curious to see her; a lady evidently—the letter shows it—but not on the stereotyped plan. A spinster, I'll wager—hum! Perhaps she's a female clergyman, or does one say clergywoman? There's a

theological look about that P., but, on the other hand, the F. has a vagrant air! And the double stroke under—the first is coquettish, and the second as black and straight as justice. P. French, whoever you may be, you are my fate for the next few months, and I am yours."

Aunt Conyngham trusted that by July Georgia would have recovered health and spirits for Newport, and her niece did not disturb the satisfactory belief, though she mentally registered a vow against visiting that or any other crowded resort during the summer. She would not hear of one of the servants accompanying her; she did not want a maid, and it was absurd that she should require protection on a journey of only half a day.

So, on the ensuing Tuesday, Miss Grosvenor left the heat and dust of the town behind at an early hour, and having traversed the monotonous plains of New Jersey, began the picturesque ascent of the Lehigh Valley Road. Owing to some delay at a junction, it was late in the afternoon when she reached her destination. She descended upon the platform and waited; as she was the only woman who had got off the train, it would not be difficult for P. French or her deputy to recognise her.

After a few instants' delay the express whirled round one of the dizzying curves in which the route is so prolific, and disappeared. A moment later Miss Grosvenor heard the sound of wheels, and from behind the station buildings came a

little open carriage, drawn by a very wicked-looking fat pony, whom the driver—a girl so pretty, that Georgia involuntarily uttered an exclamation—brought up to the end of the platform in capital style.

The charioteer sprang out, consigned her steed to the care of a porter, and walked towards Miss Grosvenor.

"You are the only petticoat here, except Indian Joe there in his blanket, and he isn't an Indian either, the old humbug, so I am sure you are my prey," said she.

"And I am sure you can't be P. French!" returned Miss Grosvenor, unable to conceal her surprise.

"And why not, pray?" asked the new-comer, laughing till she showed teeth as white as milk, and brought a whole swarm of dimples about her mouth. "I am, though! P. French—very much at your service! Landlady, boarding-house keeper—whatever you please to call me that will signify I am the person who has agreed to take you in, and do you to any extent."

"I am certain it will be accomplished in a delightful fashion," said Miss Grosvenor, laughing too.

"Pretty well for that," replied the other complacently, and then they shook hands. "Is that your baggage? Jem Hodgkins shall take it up in his waggon. Jem, Jem! Attend to those trunks like a good soul, and don't go to sleep on the road, and carry them over to Wachuset." Then to her

guest, "We needn't wait—the train is so much behind time that you must be half starved. But what shall I call you, please? or don't you want to be called? For do you know, your letter was only signed G. G., and the name on the telegram we couldn't make out."

"Good gracious!" said Georgia.

But before she could add more, her questioner was rattling on,—

"G.! G.! Why, it is more aggravating than P. French. I half made up my mind to be impertinent, and ask whether I should say Miss Geegy or Miss Giggy, only I reflected that you might take offence, and refuse to enter my den—and what a swindle for me, because you must pay for the new bay-window, else I shall have to go to jail, or, what is worse, the poor-house! So tell me how to address, and I'll be yours respectfully in a style to astonish my nearest relations. I've got none except grandma, unless I count old Doctor—that's my grey cat! Oh, I ought to have mentioned in my letter—it's rather late, but I'd better warn you—if you don't like cats, don't come. I've six, and three of them have kittens—two dogs—and my pet pigeon *will* fly into the dining-room every chance she gets! There, while I breathe a little, you can answer as many of those questions as you think fit."

"My name is Georgia Grosvenor. I like cats and dogs, but I'll kill your pigeon the first time it troubles me! I'm the worst-tempered

woman in America, and I never pay my bills. I'm in hiding now from my creditors, and that heaviest box of mine, which Jim Hodgkins is swearing over, is full of stones—that's the one I shall leave behind when I run off! And I like you awfully at first sight, and I am sure I shall hate you to-morrow—you're a great deal too pretty, and ever so much too young! Is it all satisfactory, P. French?"

Then they shook hands again, and laughed till Indian Joe and Jim Hodgkins, looking on from the further end of the platform, laughed also from sheer infection.

A few minutes afterwards they were seated in the carriage, and driving through the outskirts of the tiny village, turning into a road which led higher up among the hills.

"The pony will probably run away twice before we get home. He usually does, but if you sit still you will come to no harm," said P. French; "only if you scream, I warn you that he will stand on his hind legs and do circus."

"Then I'll scream, for I doat on circus performances! What is his name?"

"Bones," replied P. French gravely.

"Why, he's as fat and round as a dumpling!"

"That's why I call him Bones! What a stupid world it would be if one didn't call people and things out of their rightful names! I had a schoolmaster once who christened me Cricket. I worshipped that man. I asked him to marry me, and he wouldn't. I was six years old at

the time, but my spirits have never recovered from the blow! I am convinced, but for that I should have been a very cheerful young person."

"What does P. stand for anyway?" asked Miss Grosvenor.

"A great many things—pie, pudding, pretty, porcelain, persimmous,—do you want any more words? I own a dictionary. I bought it when I made up my mind to take boarders. You'll have to pay for that too, and it's a very big one! I've been studying it night and day in order to astonish you by my learning."

"But your particular P.?" questioned Miss Grosvenor, as soon as she could stop laughing. "There must be some letters after it."

"No; there were; but I've dropped them—life is too short to write more than an initial. Well, Phillis, if you will have it, though I hate the name."

"Why, it is as sweet and quaint as it can be. Just made for you!"

"I knew you'd say that!" cried P. French, with a delicious little grimace.

"Neat-handed Phillis," added Miss Grosvenor.

"I knew you'd quote that!" cried P. French, and made another grimace, different from the first, and more bewitching.

"And so you have a grandmother, and you and she live together?" pursued Miss Grosvenor.

"Beware!" exclaimed Phillis French, in a tragic tone. "A dark and awful mystery hangs over our roof—seek not to penetrate it!" Then,

in her natural voice, "Yes, we do, and a bad time poor old grandma has of it. Her name is Mrs Davis. I wanted to advertise for a young man lodger, but she thought the neighbours wouldn't like it. The neighbours are always meddling—I suppose they do everywhere. The lawyer's wife came to see us yesterday, and warned us to be very careful whom we took in, and be sure and demand heaps of references, so I hope you have brought your certificate."

"I've a wonderful recipe for bleaching hair yellow. I should think that would do just as well."

"Better! I shall try it on Doctor's tail; the fur is all worn off, but will colour it down to the very bone. Now we are on the top of the hill, just look back! Whoa, Bones; can't you stand still?" The trees had hidden the view before, but now they reached a cleared space. Below, for miles and miles, stretched the long narrow valley, a miracle of colour and loveliness—dotted with villages—a river creeping through the midst—the purple mountains shutting in the distance.

Miss Grosvenor feasted her eyes for some moments in complete silence. Phillis French watched her face, and gave an approving nod. As they drove on she said,—

"If I were not a religious woman I'd worship you!"

"I know what you mean. Of course I did not exclaim why it is so lovely that there are no words possible at first."

"In spite of being religious I will worship you!" she cried. "Well, there is the house—if it doesn't suit you will have it pulled down and pitch the big umbrella for a tent. Now, see how close I can shave that gate-post. Here's the nest, there come the dogs, and grandma's in the porch! Welcome to the home of humble virtue and conscious worth. I wish it wasn't; I hate both!"

It was as quaint, pretty an old dwelling as a pre-Raphaelite painter could have found to go into ecstacies over, with its grey front darkened by time, its moss-grown roof, its long verandah shaded by masses of wisteria, brimful vines and creeping roses, and affording a fine view of the valley and mountains.

Grandma Davis was a perfect picture too; so small, so dainty, so brisk in spite of age, that Miss Grosvenor thought the name given Phillis by her former schoolmaster would exactly suit the ancient lady, and she had a cheerful, chirping voice which carried out the resemblance.

The interior of the house was designed in an eccentric fashion, calculated to drive to despair any good, common-place person, who "wished things like her neighbours," but its vagaries enchanted Miss Grosvenor. There were winding passages—steps that led nowhere—rooms in the most unexpected places of every size and shape, except rational, respectable and square—and enough of them to have sufficed for the needs of several large families.

An exquisite neatness and refinement reigned over the whole, and Miss Grosvenor was even taken into the great kitchen, where floor and tables, pots and pans, shone like so many mirrors, and a yellow woman with a bright scarlet bandana handkerchief on her head, looked the fit priestess of the spot.

"This is Ninny," was Phillis French's introduction; "cook, housekeeper, and tyrant! Originally christened Florinda, but christening had so little effect on her, that I shortened her name to see what that would do. She can invent more delicious dishes than any other woman in the State, and, next to her mistress, is the crossest—"

"Laud's sake, Miss Phillis!" exclaimed the mulatto, chuckling and dropping curtsies, "What will the young lady think?"

"Be quiet, Ninny, or I'll bewitch you in a moment!" cried Phillis French. "Where is Cinders?" Oh, come here, Cinders. A pretty, well-grown quadroon girl of sixteen appeared, blushing and laughing. "I call her Cinders, because she never had a spot on her," was the explanation. "Now we have seen the house, come look at the garden, and my dairy, and the chickens—not that you'll ever get either cream or fowls—we send all those things to market, of course."

Presently they had a repast which seemed a sort of compromise between dinner and supper, as tempting as it was unorthodox. Phillis French chattered in the most amusing fashion, and

grandma offered humorous original remarks, and altogether Miss Grosvenor was in a state of ecstasy over everything and everybody.

Towards sunset the two girls had a walk, and conversed till they felt like old acquaintances; not that they touched upon private matters, but they discussed books, and aired their theories, and each secretly pronounced the other a new revelation in the way of youthful womankind.

When twilight deepened they returned home and sat in the porch, and watched the moon rise, meditating and dreaming in their respective fashions.

Suddenly Miss Grosvenor saw a young man approaching, a screen of wisteria hid her from view, but Phillis had established herself on the verandah steps.

"One of the youthful farmers of the neighbourhood—what a giant! The descendants of the sons of Anak must inhabit this region, if he is a fair specimen," thought Georgia, regarding the new-comer, who sauntered leisurely along the path as yet unnoticed by Phillis, deeply engrossed with her white kitten.

A man over six feet in height—loosely put together—and not even possessing a handsome face to redeem his other imperfections. He wore a grey flannel suit, and a rather battered straw hat; in fact, the only thing in his favour was the scrupulous whiteness of his linen.

"So your town lady did not arrive, Miss Phillis," he called. "No doubt she changed

her mind at the last minute—that proves she was some whimsical, fashionable young woman, instead of a female doctor, as we decided her to be."

Phillis French glanced round with one of her wickedest smiles, as the close of the visitor's speech brought him near the steps.

"Miss Georgia Grosvenor, please answer for yourself, said she. "Mr Bourke wants to know what your profession is. I warned you this was a suspicious neighbourhood."

The visitor received the lady addressed; he turned all the colours of the rainbow, and looked unutterably dazed that Georgia, far from pitying his distress, despised the mammoth for being so shy and awkward.

"I beg pardon!" he stammered. "I thought —I understood—"

"Oh, no, you didn't 'understood,' that's evident!" interrupted Phillis. "But, never mind, you are not going to be eaten, so please don't look so much as if you had been hastily roasted and served underdone."

Georgia could not help laughing; rather, to her surprise, the young man laughed as heartily as she, and though he was still scarlet, he regarded her boldly in the face.

"If I try for excuse I shall only make matters worse," he said, "so I'd better say what I came for and be done."

"Not to arrest me, I hope," Miss Grosvenor said pleasantly, though conscious of a certain condescending ring in her voice.

"Not this time," he answered; and at first she was pleased to see he could enter into a jest, and then inclined to consider his speech in the light of a liberty.

"And what did you want, Hop-o'-my-thumb?" asked Phillis French, still playing with her cat.

"I've had to write another letter to Germany. I just wished you to make sure it is understandable Teutonic."

A young farmer writing letters in German. Miss Grosvenor waxed undemocratic, and ready to sneer at the idea, though, with delightful inconsistency, it did not occur to her to disapprove of the ability of a female farmer to correct his epistle.

"Stand and deliver!" said Phillis French, and he handed her the letter, just managing to drop it, then to stumble over the skirt of her gown and hurt the cat in regaining his balance. "Sit down before you annihilate somebody, pigmy," she added. "Don't stir while I'm gone. I've a book I want to give you."

She disappeared into the house; the visitor seated himself on the steps, and twisted his battered straw hat about in his hands, by way of finding "a countenance," Miss Grosvenor concluded. She had been idly engaged in braiding a quantity of May roses into a wreath, and she still continued her occupation, rapidly deciding in her own mind that it could not be her duty to entertain Phillis French's guest. He sat so quiet that length she glanced up from her task

and saw his eyes intently fixed upon her. He proceeded immediately to colour like a raw schoolboy, but, all the same, he looked at her courageously enough.

"I was trying to think of something to say," he observed, "and every idea that came into my head was a question, and Phillis French declares it is not polite to ask questions."

Georgia was offended again; she had decided that Phillis French should be her own special manner of addressing her new acquaintance, and she disapproved sorely of this second liberty on the part of the Anakim.

"Miss French's remarks seem characterised by great sound sense," she replied.

"I believe you!" he exclaimed, and grew more awkward than ever, but added in a composed voice, oddly at variance with his appearance, "I suppose slang isn't good manners either."

"I suppose not. I have had very slight experience in it, however," returned Georgia, and then remembered that to take the trouble to be annoyed with this unlicked cub was paying him more attention than suited his position or her dignity.

"Haven't you?" he asked. "You've missed a good deal. And I thought American girls liked slang."

Really, this young man, with a battered straw hat, and this odd mixture of shyness and assurance, was an excessively disagreeable person.

Miss Grosvenor braided industriously at her wreath, and did not respond.

"Was that impolite too?" he inquired presently, in a tone which sounded as if he had been studying the matter, and found himself unable to resolve his doubts.

"It was a somewhat peculiar speech for an American to make," she said; "I have occasionally seen such statements in foreign journals."

"There was where I found it," returned he. "I've two others that I haven't read yet. I'll go home and burn them before they corrupt my morals still more—no, I mean my manners."

"I think I will advise you to," she said so gravely that, after glancing keenly at her, he rushed into a fit of awkwardness and blushing which far surpassed his former efforts.

Neither spoke again; Miss Grosvenor braided steadily on; Mr Bourke maltreated his hat, while his ears grew each instant redder, till they positively resembled two signal-lights; yet when Georgia glanced at him again, he was still fixedly regarding her, and she fancied that he looked not only obstinate, but disapproving. Certainly in the whole course of her life she had never encountered so inexplicable a phenomenon, such a bundle of contrasts, as this very unpleasant acquaintance of Phillis French's.

Just then that young lady appeared, calling,—

"Here is the book, Hop-o'-my-thumb! Don't lose yourself and it under a cabbage leaf before you get home."

"I'll try not to," he answered, rising. "Can't I say a word to grandma before I go?"

"Hum!" she said doubtfully. "I don't know about having grandma's head unsettled by the attentions of giddy young men. Well, come into the kitchen, she is there polishing her knitting needles with coal ashes. I must hear what you say; I've my duty to perform by grandma, and I'll do it till she hates me."

She moved towards the door; the giant followed a few steps, then, suddenly recollecting himself, turned back to Miss Grosvenor, and bowed, saying—

"Good-night, Miss George."

Phillis French burst out laughing.

"What have I done wrong now?" he asked, with a rueful face.

"Called her by her Christian name, and even cut off a syllable of that," cried Phillis, in malicious glee.

"Bless my soul!" he fairly groaned, "I'm sure I thought you called her so!"

"I called her Miss Georgia Grosvenor. You were falling over the cat, and only heard half her name," said Phillis. "I should think you would do well to beg her pardon."

Looking up at him, prepared to say something which might relieve his confusion, Miss Grosvenor saw the hopelessly obstinate expression she had already remarked settle over his face.

"She knows I didn't mean to be rude," said

he doggedly; then he joined in Phillis's laughter, and added, in a boyish way, "At least I hope so; I beg your pardon, Miss Grosvenor."

Then he hurried into the passage, and Phillis French followed. Presently Georgia saw the pair straying down one of the garden paths, talking very earnestly. Phillis's playful animation was quite gone; she seemed strenuously insisting upon something, and he appeared to be arguing the point. The two passed on, and were hidden from Miss Grosvenor's sight by a clump of lilac bushes.

"It is too bad," thought she, "to think of a girl like that being thrown away on such a great, coarse country lout. Just the effect of propinquity, nothing else. He can no more appreciate her than I could tell the difference between wheat and rye. Positively it would be a charitable work to turn his head a bit, and so open her eyes. Why, it is worse than Beauty and the Beast; it is Titania and Bottom."

All of which was as exaggerated and unjust as possible; but Georgia Grosvenor often erred in that way when her prejudices were roused—prejudices as strong as they were unreasonable. After a while her hostess returned, singing in a half voice a sweet old Irish melody, looking pretty and fairy-like enough, to justify Miss Grosvenor's comparison where she was concerned.

"And what do you think of my neighbour?" she asked, as she reached the steps.

"I was busy with my flowers; I believe I had not thought," Miss Grosvenor answered.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Phillis French. "Not to be impolite to the stranger within my gates, permit me to remark that you speak very much as I do when I tell a fib."

"I hope I am not above the weaknesses of my sex," said Miss Grosvenor laughing.

"And what do you think of my neighbour?" repeated Phillis. "You asked what P. stood for—pertinacious, among other things! So you may as well speak, because I'll have an answer, if we stop here till midnight."

"I think he is the awkwardest, ugliest, monstrousest creature I ever encountered," cried Miss Grosvenor. "Are you satisfied now?"

"Perfectly," replied Phillis French, in a delighted tone. "Do you admire the violin?"

"Why, of course!"

"So does he, and plays it like an angel. Do you excel in needlework?"

"Goodness! no."

"Neither does he. Can you speak seven languages?"

"Thanks to my laziness, I cannot."

"Nor can he. Observe the points of resemblance; and yet you hate him! Hark! there is grandma calling me to come in out of the dew. It is so much a matter of habit with her, that she would call me just the same if I did not exist, and I never pay any attention. She is

the sweetest old darling in the world, is grandma.

"There I agree with you," said Miss Grosvenor, with a strong emphasis on the opening word of her sentence.

"Had we disagreed? Oh! you mean about my neighbour. But, if you remember, I expressed no opinion."

"You have one, I suppose?"

"Have I? I don't know. Listen; I hear an owl. As I'm a Christian woman, I hear an owl, and that idiot of a lady, Jane Grey, is out in the grass with her children—I mean her chickens. If the original owner of the name was as great a goose, she richly deserved to lose her head."

And away ran Phillis French.

CHAPTER II.

JUST pleasantly fatigued, Miss Grosvenor slept better than she had for weeks, and her first thought when she woke in the morning was one of self-congratulation at being so far away from city sights and sounds.

It seemed a shame to remain in bed an instant longer, and she rose with alacrity and a sensation of strength, such as had not visited her since her illness. As soon as she began to move about, she heard a mocking bird burst into song; yet neither in the house nor verandah had she seen a caged specimen of the species; and she was ornithologist enough to know that Pennsylvania lay too far north to possess the bird as a native inhabitant.

Such an impish, contrast-loving singer! Now, it imitated the coo of a pigeon, the notes of a thrush; anon, it whistled a bar of a popular waltz; then indulged in all sorts of marvellous trills and gurgles peculiar to its own race.

Miss Grosvenor ran to the open window,

pushed back the shutters, and gazed out. She forgot the mocking bird in the entrancing delight of studying the landscape. She could see for miles and miles over valley and hills, river and uplands, till the mountains mingled with the royal-hued clouds, and closed in the view.

Another succession of mad trills from the silver-throated songster caused her to look down among the flower beds under the casement. She only saw Phillis French standing there, regarding her with laughing eyes. Phillis French, prettier than ever, in a blue and white percale costume, with a wicked little straw hat, crossed by knots of azure ribbon perched above her left ear,—her complexion so brilliant and her eyes so bright, that Miss Grosvenor cried,—

"Good-morning, Aurora! Were the gods all asleep when you left Olympus?"

"They got up early and woke me, and wouldn't give me any peace till I brought you out, so that they might see how you looked in your night-gown—not the goddesses, mind! Juno said it was improper, and Venus declared you couldn't stand the toilette."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Grosvenor, "What a tongue you've got; you're madder than I!"

"I'm not!" retorted Phillis French. "I'll tell my grandma if you talk to me about gods and goddesses. She has brought me up virtuously. I say, you've as much hair on your head as when you bade me good-night. I'll never forgive you! And yours is real gold colour. Oh,

you said you had a recipe! Well, I've no more time to waste. I'm going out to the fallow."

"What on earth is that? It sounds very improper."

"It's only a burned field ready for the first crop, you poor, untutored city girl."

"I want to go; please wait for me," said Georgia.

"I will, if you can bathe and dress in less time than woman ever did yet! I'll make you some coffee while you're about it regularly. French, not P., trois frères."

"Agreed!" said Georgia, and drew in her head only to put it out again, "Oh, where's the mocking bird?" she asked, but P. French had already disappeared. The songster's voice burst forth anew, full and rich, and displaying fresh powers of mimicry. "I never heard anything like it. Why, he is worth a small fortune!"

"Go 'way wid your blarney!" cried a hoarse voice from the verandah, and Miss Grosvenor, with a sudden recollection of her dishevelled attire, stepped hastily back, and then Phillis French called,—

"The show is free gratis for nothing, my boarder, but we manage to make up for it in the extras."

"Why, it wasn't you!" exclaimed Georgia, again showing herself at the window.

"Oh no," Phillis French answered, "it was grandma. It was the parson. Oh, do go and jump into your bath tub. Time is money, and Jem

Sykes is determined to have his way about that field, and he sha'n't. I know he is right, but I'd rather lose this year's profit than give in. Discipline must be preserved. You may think that is from the Proverbs of Solomon, but it isn't. If you're not down stairs in twenty minutes, I'll let Jem work his fiendish will with the fallow, and charge it in your account."

In a reasonably brief time Miss Grosvenor made her appearance, and met Phillis French emerging from the kitchen.

"Will you have your coffee decorously in the dining-room?" she asked.

"No, in the porch; you called me a heathen, so I shall exercise my privileges," Georgia replied, walking on out into the verandah. Phillis French followed, and very soon after came Cinders (whose name seemed a more delicious misnomer than ever, so fresh and pretty did she look), bearing a tray clothed in a snowy damask napkin, whereon stood a little coffee-pot, a covered dish, and the most marvellous cream colour and blue cup and saucer and century old spoon, that ever delighted the eyes of a modern curiosity collector.

Miss Grosvenor seated herself in a rustic chair, and Cinders placed the tray on a table before her.

"What a cup and saucer! What an angelic spoon!" cried Georgia.

"Pour out your coffee, and do see what's in the dish," said Phillis French.

Miss Grosvenor raised the cover and ejaculated,—

"Corn meal muffins! And I vowed last night one could not find them, looking as they ought outside of Virginia." The perfection of the coffee caused her presently to add, "Why, Alfred de Musset would come back to life to drink this, and after he had drunk it, he would write a new poem far beyond 'Ninon,' even!"

"Oh, if you will read me 'Ninon.' I've tried it, Denis Bourke has, but the accent! Now couldn't you?" exclaimed Phillis French somewhat unintelligibly.

Miss Grosvenor turned rusty at once; she could hardly have told why the speech had this effect upon her, but so it was.

"Denis Bourke and De Musset's 'Ninon' in the same breath!" said she. "You have spoiled both coffee and muffin."

"Luckily you had nearly finished the two," returned Phillis French rather dryly.

Georgia glanced up with a sudden apology in her face.

"Was I rude?" she asked.

"You couldn't be," Phillis French answered with one of her bright smiles. "But you ill-treated my Denis Bourke! Oh my fallow, my Sykes, my duties! I go; will you come? If not, farewell, Katherine Mavourneen, it may be four years, and it may be eleven!"

Away she ran down the verandah steps, through the garden, and out into the meadow,

so fast that Miss Grosvenor could not overtake her, until she was far on in the path leading towards a lovely wood. They strolled along talking pleasantly, getting away from nonsense for awhile, stopping to look back at the view, to listen to the thrushes, to peep into a bird's nest hidden in a thicket of alders; then to see a wonderful wasp's house, which Phillis had discovered; then a peculiar specimen of field-spider, with a body as big as a thimble, busy weaving a silver-coloured web; then a long procession of ants, that evidently believed all the work of this earth devolved upon them; an odd kind of toad-stool which Phillis said could only be found in this particular spot the county through; a fairy thorn of a toad-stool, spotted and ringed with yellow and scarlet tints; then to gather some Indian pipes, that most capricious shaped of all the fungus family, and unknown to Miss Grosvenor; then to pause by the brook and admire the spring flowers and tiny ferns; and then, a little to Georgia's horror, she must needs study the remarkable horned worms on the pollard willows —nothing escaped Phillis French's observation— nothing in nature was mean or unsightly to her.

"You see it is only men who are ugly," she said. "You shiver at my poor worms. Why, regarded through a microscope they are marvels of colour. Now, just look at that fat beetle, how consequential he is. I'm sure he's the one that stitched Cock Robin's shroud. Well, here are some blue butterflies to console you."

"A walk with you is a lesson in natural history," observed Miss Grosvenor. "You know every tree and flower and insect."

"You don't suppose I live with my eyes shut?"

"Most of us do, I think. Now I am no more a wholesale admirer of nature than I am of humanity. I appreciate her after a fashion, but it never occurred to me to study all the separate items in the count as you do."

"Dear me! According to your flattering verdict, I must be a remarkable person without knowing it," said the other. "I feel sure the moment I saw you that you were gifted with powers of insight, outsight, second sight, and all the rest!"

"P. French, I believe you would jest if you were dying, and teaze an angel if he came to visit you! Heavens, how I pity your adorers!"

"Reserve your sympathy, or rather bestow it on me—this neighbourhood does not produce the genius you mention."

"Oh, oh!" expostulated Georgia.

"She is a positive young woman, this namesake of a headstrong Southern State," observed Phillis French, addressing vacancy; "she is imaginative too, so there will be a pleasure in helping her to indulge the faculty."

They reached the fallow-field, and Miss Grosvenor sat contentedly on the lichen-covered stump of a tree, while Phillis French held a long discussion with her worthy adjutant, and ended

by convincing him that not only did she mean to have her own way, but was right in her decision.

The two girls wandered on towards a ledge of rocks that formed the base of a steep hill, strayed about in the shade, and discussed numerous subjects, finding so many points of difference in their opinions, and yet so much upon which they were in sympathy, that the study of each other's character proved very interesting. Miss Grosvenor decided it had not often been her good fortune to enjoy so delightful a morning, and that, among the whole round of people she had ever met, Phillis French was the most charmingly tantalising—it seemed utterly impossible to form any idea of what she might do or say next.

"It is nearly morn," the girl observed suddenly, shading her eyes with her hand, to look up at the sun. "I'll take you home through the wood—it is shady and cool there, even at mid-day. By-the-bye, I never remembered to ask what time you like to dine."

"What is your usual hour?"

"Oh! we don't have dinner as a rule; but as you pay for yours, I suppose you must have it daily."

"I hate dinner in the country!"

"Then what do you say to luncheon at twelve, and a high tea any time in the evening, when we feel disposed?"

"I think it an admirable idea."

"Do you like shortcake filled with raspberry jam?"

"Oh!"

"With cream poured over it?"

"Shade of Lucullus!"

"Then you do like it? I'm sorry, because I meant to have one to-night, but if you approve of it, I can't—boarders must be treated like children—whatever they want, is the thing they must not have."

They entered the wood—the loveliest haunt imaginable—free from underbrush, with capricious paths winding in and out beneath the great pine-trees, which murmured mysteriously in the light wind, looking dark and solemn even in the noontide sunshine, which could only cast broken fantastic gleams through their dense boughs, like weird hieroglyphs, representing the mysterious language they whispered to the upper air.

Between the straight boles, which gave the effect of an aisle in some vast cathedral, Miss Grosvenor caught glimpses of a minature lake, and presently they came out on its margin, fringed with dog-wood trees and alder bushes, that dipped their waving branches in the water, over which a flock of wild fowl were swimming slowly in eccentric circles. In the centre was a tiny islet, just large enough to hold a stone-pine and a few blossoming shrubs; beyond the sparkling sheet spread another stretch of woodland, above which the mountain-tops were

visible, bathed in a glory too bright for the eyes to bear.

"What a lovely spot!" cried Miss Grosvenor. "Now, I do hope it owns a pretty name!"

"Nothing more romantic than Deephole," replied Phillis French; "it has another title, so you will have a choice—Podgers's Pond. The first is really appropriate—in the middle it is awfully deep. A girl was drowned there a few years ago. She went out in a boat to gather water-lilies and fell overboard. She was to have been married within a week. Her lover found her—the lily-stems knotted about her neck. She was buried on the day set for her wedding."

"Poor creature!" said Georgia.

"Lucky creature, you mean!" exclaimed Phillis French. "Great heavens! only to think of lying down under the cool waves, and being at rest—at rest—done with it all! Oh! this life holds one good thing in its round of wretchedness—death!"

Miss Grosvenor stared at her in amazement; the girl had her arms stretched out—her eager eyes fastened on the waters. Georgia caught at her dress, with a sudden fear; the face was all the more startling in its tragic intensity from the contrast to its usual mischievous carelessness.

"Miss French!" Georgia ejaculated.

"P., if you please!" returned the other, bursting into a gay laugh.

"Why, you frightened me!" said Miss Grosvenor, almost vexed.

"I thought I'd give you a taste of my melodramatic powers," said she.

"I don't believe it—you were in earnest!" cried Georgia, not really meaning what she said, though that momentary expression which had so utterly changed the lovely countenance had given her still a new example of her companion's protean character.

"Of course, I was," she answered, in a teazing tone. "I shall end that way sometime, and you'll inherit my pigeon."

"I should say—I don't wish to be hasty in my judgment—but I should say you could be the most exasperating woman that ever existed!"

"I hope so, I am sure," Phillis replied, complacently. "How long do you suppose it will be before we quarrel?"

"Oh, I should fancy the catastrophe might happen at any moment, and recur about sixteen times a-day on an average," said Georgia laughing. "You certainly are the most fascinating and inexplicable member of our sex I ever encountered."

"Ah! but your pilgrimage has not been a very long one. If you were a Methuselah of nearly four-and-twenty like myself, you'd have lost the power of being astonished."

"Why, P. French, I thought you were about eighteen—good four years younger than I."

"Il y avait une fois un roi qui démandait à un magicien le moyen de connaître les pensées d'autrui. On fit bâtir une maison en cristal

que l'on appella le palais de la vérité parce que. Did you ever read the legend of the Palace of Truth, Miss Grosvenor?"

"Now, where did you learn to speak French with so perfect an accent?" cried Georgia. "Oh, if you don't tell me all about yourself."

"'What was her history?' 'A blank, my lord,'" quoted Phillis French, turning into a path which led back to the meadows. "Now, come this way; I've a grain field you haven't seen."

They walked on in silence for some time, Miss Grosvenor busy with perplexing possibilities in regard to her new acquaintance, which that young lady interrupted by asking,—

"Did you ever meet a woodchuck in your travels?"

"No, no! Where is he?"

"There is a woodchuck's hole, but Denis Bourke shot the owner some months since," replied Phillis French.

"Who is taking my name in vain?" called a voice from the other side of the hazel thicket which fringed the edge of the wood.

"Be careful where you step, Miss Grosvenor!" exclaimed Phillis. "That Lilliputian is hidden under some toad-stool—one might crush the poor little thing without knowing it."

Miss Grosvenor made no answer, but, to judge by her face, she felt annoyed enough at this interruption of their conversation, to be wishing it were possible to render her companion's pretended alarm a reality.

"That is how you mind your work!" continued Phillis, trying to peep over the hedge. "I'll have you arrested if you come trespassing on my land."

"I'm not on your land—this thicket is the dividing line between our farms!"

"You say so, but it's my belief that you and your surveyor cheated me out of an acre and a quarter."

Mr Bourke's head and shoulders appeared above the bushes.

"Good morning," he said. "Miss Grosvenor, I hope you slept well, and are quite rested."

"Thanks," Georgia answered; "my journey was hardly long enough to give me an excuse for calling myself tired."

She spoke with elaborate courtesy, but her voice had taken a chill, languid intonation, which caused Phillis French secretly to smile.

It was evident that Denis Bourke possessed quicker intuitions than Miss Grosvenor had given him credit for in her hastily-formed judgment of the preceding night. He frowned and looked very black—that is, metaphorically speaking, for in reality he turned so red that his brown face grew almost brick colour.

"What are you blushing about, Hop-o'-my-thumb?" demanded Phillis French with a laugh of malicious delight. "Perhaps you are embarrassed at meeting us."

"Perhaps I am," he replied.

Miss Grosvenor perceived by the expression

of his countenance that embarrassment had no part in his sensations. He was sullen, not shy, and she waxed somewhat indignant that he should presume to take offence at her tone of voice. Phillis French looked from one to the other in undisguised amusement.

"Do you want to go up the hill with us, Denis Bourke?" she asked, as well as she could articulate.

"I don't know what you are laughing at," said he.

"But that needn't hinder your going," retorted she teazingly. "Shall we go?" she added, turning to Georgia. "It is further than by the fields, but there's a nice view."

"Miss Grosvenor won't thank you for giving me the invitation," said Bourke bluntly.

Miss Grosvenor's face showed a faint surprise at the liberty he took in interpreting her sentiments.

"I am afraid, Miss French, that it would be more than I can attempt this morning," she said.

"I shouldn't have intruded, Miss Phillis!" exclaimed Bourke, with flashing eyes. "I'll bid you good day—I must be getting home."

He bowed stiffly, and stalked away. Phillis French laughed so hard that she had to sit down in the grass. Georgia stood regarding her with a certain displeasure, but the ringing mirth was so infectious that she began to laugh also.

"How does your opinion of my neighbour

stand this morning?" demanded Phillis. "Do you think him as awkward and dull as you did last night?"

"I think I may add a tolerable share of presumption to his other qualities," returned Georgia.

"You had three minds to say impertinence!" cried Phillis French, in renewed merriment. "Did you change the word for fear of hurting my feelings?"

"I hope I shall never say anything impolite about any of your acquaintances," said Georgia, in a stately fashion.

"Denis Bourke is one of my friends," amended Phillis.

"But I suppose you will not quarrel with me because I cannot at once regard all your friends with your partialities?" said Georgia, with a little asperity.

"No," laughed Phillis. "I'll be content with your promising to like me."

"And I do!" cried Georgia. "It sounds romantic and ridiculous to say—when I never saw you till yesterday—but I feel as if we were old acquaintances already."

She stopped short. She could not venture to express the thought in her mind—which was, that her interest in Phillis, her admiration for her mental qualities and delicate physical loveliness, caused her to feel horribly vexed at the idea of the girl's conceiving a fancy for this awkward and doubtless half-educated country

fellow, just because the chances of life had brought no man worthy of her within reach.

Yet even while thinking thus, Georgia recalled the tone of Bourke's voice; it was not that of an ignorant person, and though he evidently possessed none of the conversational readiness so common with Americans of every degree, his speech was free from provincialisms, or the unpleasant accent which one finds so frequently, even among people possessed of book-learning enough to give them claim to be considered as far beyond the average of the cultivated portion of humanity.

She became conscious that Miss French was watching her with a mingled expression of amusement and penetration; she felt as if the girl were fairly reading everything in her mind, and grew almost confused under the scrutiny of the beautiful eyes.

"Think the whole out and decide what you will disclose and what you will keep to yourself," said Phillis, mockingly. "Oh, there is something I forgot to tell Mr Sykes! Will you sit down and rest till I come? You mustn't tire yourself to death the first day."

Miss Grosvenor elected to wait, and Phillis French, after seeing her comfortably established on the mossy turf, with her back against a walnut tree, went her way, with many laughing injunctions as to Georgia's conduct during her absence. Miss Grosvenor was rather glad to find herself alone for awhile; her capricious spirits had deserted

her. They had a trick of going up and down as suddenly as mercury in a tube, without even the mercury's excuse of a change in the exterior temperature.

She felt half vexed with Phillis for having been able so easily to read her thoughts,—still more with this Denis Bourke, for being so near as to make any discussion or reflection concerning him necessary, and positively exasperated with Georgia Grosvenor on account of this irritated mood, equally puzzling and useless.

Like many bright, witty people, she was somewhat melancholy-minded when left to her own resources, and strive as she might, had never succeeded in conquering a habit of letting her thoughts drift towards unsatisfactory ruminations upon the emptiness and disappointments of life. She fancied this weakness the result of having lived a great deal and being no longer a young girl; but in reality it owed its origin to the fact that she had not lived and felt enough. Her womanhood had owned no strong sensation, and her misanthropy was as baseless as that which youthful poets are wont to display in their (more or less) harmonious verse.

She was roused from what she believed meditation—but which, like most human beings' efforts in that line, was only aimless reverie—by the sound of footsteps on the green sward. She raised her eyes and saw Denis Bourke.

"I have come back," said he, abruptly.

He looked neither embarrassed nor sullen now —simply determined.

"I see you have," she answered, laughing, in spite of herself.

"I was afraid you would be gone," he continued rapidly. "I wanted to say—not that you'll care, but it's for my own satisfaction—that I seemed rude; I didn't mean to—you don't mind, do you?"

Notwithstanding his stalwart form and his heavy moustache, he behaved so like an awkward boy—yet a boy who had the instincts of a well-mannered person—that Georgia could not remember either her vexation or the condescending patronage with which she had regarded him.

"You said nothing to require any excuse," she replied.

"Thanks; you're very good!" said he; paused as if wanting to add something—began to turn red anew—faltered out—"Good bye!" and retired behind the thicket as abruptly as he had started forth.

Georgia had just settled herself again into a comfortable attitude when a crackling among the twigs strewn over the ground betokened another interruption. There stood Mr Bourke again.

"I beg your pardon," said he; "it's only to say that, on second thoughts, I was a donkey to think it necessary to come. Of course you hadn't paid attention enough to remember I had been here at all."

"Your explanation is quite satisfactory," re-

plied Georgia, divided between a fresh return of vexation and a desire to laugh.

"Good morning," said he, and vanished

"This time he really has gone," thought Miss Grosvenor.

Again the twigs rustled. Here he was once more.

"I only wanted to ask you to tell Miss French I am going into the village, and will bring back that saddle," said he.

"You are sure that is all?" Georgie demanded pleasantly.

"Yes—why?"

"Did you ever read Alice in Wonderland?"

"Oh, you mean the Cheshire cat!" cried he.

"Exactly! He appeared and disappeared so often, that Alice declared he made her dizzy."

"And do you—no wonder! Good-bye—I'm really off now!"

And this time he was, and Miss Grosvenor sat reflecting until she got so far away from the present, that she forgot his existence, and, indeed that of Phillis French even, until the voice of the latter made itself heard, carolling a gay ditty, and the graceful creature emerged from the recesses of the wood, pink and breathless with her rapid walk, and apparently in a still higher fund of spirits than when she departed.

CHAPTER III.

BY the time Miss Grosvenor had been a fortnight in her new quarters, she felt as much at home with her surroundings as if she had passed years there. The quiet was soothing and grateful, and the freedom from restraint, and the artificial laws wherewith her aunt hedged in both their lives, an inexpressible pleasure, all the greater because entirely new in her experience.

Georgia's father—a younger son of a noble English family—had died when she was eleven, and her mother two years later. Since that period her home had been with Mrs Conyngham, the only near relative she possessed, except a half-brother—also on the maternal side—whom she loved dearly, and who returned her affection in kind.

Georgia Grosvenor had been a success in society since her appearance therein at seventeen ; she was considered a beauty and a wit, and had received adulation enough to have completely turned the head of many a girl, though its chief

effect upon her appeared to be the rendering her slightly cynical and somewhat capricious. Satisfied with her life she certainly was not, and she felt a certain contempt for herself, because she lacked the energy or courage to turn it into other channels; though this would assuredly have been difficult, and what to do, or what she really wanted, a more hopeless puzzle still.

She had reached two-and-twenty without making the brilliant marriage which everybody had expected of her long since, and had flung aside so many fine offers which Aunt Conyngham had termed a simple recklessness, that this guide of her youth—the most mundane and managing of women—had been at least half a score of times driven to the verge of despair by the folly and obstinacy of the pupil whom she had trained so carefully in the worship of her own chief idol, the World.

But new hopes had sprung up in that lady's breast during the present spring. Georgia had at length allowed one aspirant for her hand to persuade her to meditate upon his proposal during those quiet months in the country, and never had the perverse damsel gone so far in her complacency towards any former admirer.

Had Herbert Caruthers raved over the fever in his heart, and the fire in his veins—uttered ecstatic promises—demanded affection and hinted at possible tragic results, if disappointment overtook his hopes, Georgia would have sent him to the right-about as unceremoniously as she had

her other suitors. But Mr Caruthers had done nothing of the sort; he was too dignified, and held his feelings too firmly in check ever to rave upon any subject. His sentiments were definable by the words admiration and esteem, and his demands upon her limited to the significance of the latter term.

He was very wealthy, fine looking, and forty-one,—all these possessions which suited Georgia's ideas, if marriage must be contemplated. But Mr Caruthers had personal merits which appealed strongly to her, though she admitted that they required the addition of what might be termed his trio of accidental gifts, namely, the money, the good looks and the age; especially the latter, for a young man would have stipulated for love, and Georgia had no faith in her capacity to meet such demand.

He was a lawyer, standing in the front rank of his profession; a politician, highly cultivated, agreeable, generous and, best of all, exceedingly ambitious. Now Georgia was a very ambitious woman, only if she married, she wanted a husband upon whom she could centre all her aspirations, and so obtain that vicarious gratification which to certain feminine natures is the pleasantest form of all.

She had met Mr Caruthers in Europe when she had gone over for a brief summer holiday, and on her return to America had resumed their acquaintance with a satisfaction which rather surprised herself. A year had elapsed since Georgia's

coming back, and up to the time of her setting forth for Phillis French's farm-house, scarcely a day had gone without her seeing Mr Caruthers. So she had learned to know him well—that is, as well as men and women meeting under conventional restraints ever can know each other—and so to like him. He had been so guarded in his conduct that she had not dreamed of ranking him among the list of even possible adorers, though I cannot in conscience allow him to take credit for that wisdom. Aunt Conyngham—his confidante from the first, had counselled such tactics, and kept him up to them too, sometimes with considerable difficulty, until he discovered by the progress he was making in his intimacy with Georgia, that her relative's Machiavelian policy was the only safe one he could pursue.

When, before her departure for the country, Mr Caruthers did ask her to marry him, Georgia was so completely taken by surprise, that, had she been possessed of less reflective faculty, she might in the state she was—tired mentally—weak physically—have replied in the affirmative, and afterwards held to her pledge from a sheer dread of giving pain—always a potent reason with a woman, unless she is a born flirt, or has grown hard and bitter towards men from having suffered through some particular member of the sex. The offer was tempting, for participation in his aims would give an object to existence, which she had scores of times told him seemed so frivolous and empty. He asked

too nothing beyond what she had it in her power to give—friendship and esteem ; and he pleaded his cause well, begging her to trust to his assurances—to put by thought (a thing strictly ordered by the physicians in a tone of announcing something as easy as to avoid going out in the rain, or wetting one's feet), and let her devoted friend perform this troublesome operation for her.

But weary and helpless, and hopeless as she was under the horrible depression caused by the suffering, arising from that mysterious malady termed "disordered nerves," Georgia had not reached a point where she could lose her strong individuality sufficiently to go to this extreme. The utmost Mr Caruthers could gain was a promise to consider the matter during the summer, and give a response when she returned to town. As soon, or nearly as soon, as she had promised this, she grew frightened, and wanted to end the matter there and then, but Aunt Conyngham had vowed such conduct would be brutal, and Mr Caruthers had said—and said it in nice phrase too—that it would be unjust to her as well as himself. Georgia remained two weeks in town after that conversation, and Mr Caruthers proved so exactly what she could wish in every respect, that Georgia could not be sorry for what had happened, especially as she told him frankly that she had not the slightest idea she should ever change her no (which he would not let her utter) into the wished for yes. She admitted

that it would be pleasant to remember there was a faithful friend always thinking of her, and she would answer his letters,—friendly letters being understood.

So this was the work Miss Grosvenor had before her, though it must be admitted that she had not yet commenced her task, unless answering a cheerful letter she received by an equally cheerful, though more brief epistle, and telling herself that when thoroughly rested she must begin to think seriously, could be considered a step in that direction.

Somehow the days floated on with such rapidity that she seemed to have no leisure for anything outside their pleasant details, though they were so monotonous in their pleasantness that she forgot to notice how fast they fled. Daily the world looked further and further off, and already Aunt Conyngham's frequent communications only seemed an echo from the great ocean, a restless murmur, which merely increased the grateful sense of repose in the haven she had so unexpectedly reached.

Phillis French continued always a delightful study, as difficult as it was interesting; indeed, in most respects, this entire episode proved a fresh revelation to Georgia. She had spent the larger portion of her past in Europe, and her knowledge of American life was confined to the habits of rich, idle people in great cities—of the ways of living among quiet country homes she positively knew much less than she did of the habits of

Tyrolese peasants or Italian contadini. Here she found herself in the companionship of a girl really better cultivated than half the women of her acquaintance ; a lady in every sense, and uniting with her accomplishments and her knowledge of books a practical mastery over the work-a-day side of existence which Georgia, if she had ever thought about the matter, would have considered incompatible with the former qualities, though now that the case was brought before her eyes, she recognised clearly the absurdity of her old opinions.

Phillis French overlooked her farm, was as wise in the rotation of crops as if she had been a ploughman, a good judge of live stock, from horses to pigs; and, indoors, able not only to superintend affairs, but if need were, to do everything herself, from making a pudding to roasting the meat, and do it all in the highest style of art. That abomination, beef baked until utterly juiceless and tasteless, never disgraced her table ; a soup kettle prevented the horrible waste of excellent materials, which, as a rule, goes on in American middle-class houses, and provided without trouble or expense the dish that ought for health's sake to be the first at the daily hearty meal which the human animal must have. Then, too, Phillis French's domain contained every modern invention for the easier and swifter performances of household labour, from the patent clothes-wringer to the sewing-machine.

"They seem a little extravagance in the buy-

ing," she said one day, when discussing such matters with Georgia, "but in the end they prove a saving in actual money, as well as in the wear and tear of bodily strength. The woman who shirks her duties, however coarse or distasteful, is a monster; the woman who spends an hour more than is absolutely necessary over physical drudgery, is a wilful sinner."

"Strong," said Miss Grosvenor, "but true."

"Up to the present generation," pursued Phillis, "American women in the country made a god of housework; they get themselves into a state of mind where to sit down and read a book, or take a day's amusement, seemed a positive crime."

"Luckily ideas have changed," said Georgia.

"Yes; but you may still find plenty of women with more than average abilities—in their girlhood fairly educated—who for years have buried their immortal souls in bread dough, stifled them under rag carpets—worn-out youth, and wasted talents in constant and perfectly unnecessary toil. Women with whom it is an article of religion, that the very broom handles should be scrubbed, and if they could find nothing else to do, would turn over the boards of the kitchen porch floor and scrape them with a case knife."

"Are not the men in fault?" asked Georgia. "American masculine stomachs, apparently, require so much rich food to satisfy them."

"That is the fault of the mothers," said Phillis French. "When the children want to eat be-

tween meals, they are given pie and cake instead of wholesome bread and butter. Why, you will still find plenty of farm-houses where people eat sweet-cake and pastry at breakfast, and conclude with a similar performance just before going to bed, then they wonder that dyspepsia is the curse of the land. The boys grow up expecting to have the same régime in their own houses because 'mother did,' and the girls expect to gratify their husbands for no better reason."

"You ought to deliver a public lecture on the subject," returned Georgia, laughing at her friend's energy.

"I'd like to," said Phillis. "I would tell every girl who means to marry a farmer to insist that her bridegroom should buy all sorts of labour-saving machines down to that for pitting cherries —he can do it for his farm, why not for his kitchen? They will cost no more money than the silver teaspoons and the fine parlour furniture for a room that won't be opened twice a-year. Besides, they'll keep her so young and fresh, that instead of wondering, after a few years of married life, if he shall wed pretty Jane Stokes, when he buries the faded, bony creature whose nerves are all outside her skin, and who greets him with a sob or a snarl, she will remain pleasant in her husband's eyes—a helpmeet, and not a drag."

Just here grandma looked in at the door, and said in her soft, flute-like old voice,—

"Has my girl mounted her hobby, Miss Grosvenor? Be patient, and let her ride it to death, for she'll give you no peace until she does."

They all three laughed heartily, and Phillis French vowed that she would waste no more wisdom upon either of them, at least for that morning.

Grandma French and Georgia speedily became great friends, and as Phillis's occupation threw Miss Grosvenor upon her own resources during the greater portion of each day, she fell into the habit of spending a good deal of time in the old lady's special sitting-room—the pleasantest, coziest nook in the whole house.

Grandma was several years the senior of the century, but her mental faculties were clear and vigorous as ever—her memory, in particular, really something marvellous. She was the gentlest and sweetest of human beings, and her influence insensibly permeated like sunshine the hearts of all about her. Her nature had softened and widened until the shackles of theology possessed no hold upon her mind; human creeds and doctrines were lost in the heavenly light which illuminated her soul, the boundless faith and charity which united to make the "perfect love that casteth out fear," and rendered life one constant psalm of thanksgiving.

Georgia found herself in a mood when occupation of any sort seemed an appalling effort, so it suited her to sit and listen to the ancient lady's quaint poetical talk, and, if conscience pricked

her for being so incorrigibly idle, she could quiet it by reflecting that she was not entirely useless, since her companionship gave pleasure to some one human being.

She soon discovered that grandma shared her predilection for romances and dramatic verse, so she brought out her stores of books, and they read them together. Phillis laughingly declared that the town-bred young woman was hopelessly contaminating her venerable relative's morals, and that she should be forced to send them both to the strictest boarding-school within reach. But in spite of her strictures, she read the romances also, and enjoyed them, though much given to cynical criticisms in regard to the sentimental portions. As for the poetry, the reading that aloud became her allotted task, after Georgia discovered what new interest and significance her wonderful elocutionary powers gave the familiar dramas, when excitement caused her for the time completely to merge her own identity in Imogene's sorrows or Rosalind's wit.

Georgia's attempts to fathom Phillis's character were incessant, but made in no cold spirit of curiosity to gratify a predilection for psychological studies. She loved the girl, and though she smiled at herself for rushing into a sudden friendship, as if she were an enthusiastic miss of sixteen, her mockery did not modify her feelings.

Phillis returned Miss Grosvenor's affection frankly and warmly, but she made no confidences. Georgia knew that her own theories were suffi-

ciently coloured by her personal experience to enable any acute person to form a tolerably correct idea of what that experience had been, and applying this rule to her new friend, she was puzzled to understand how into a youth, spent in that retired spot, there could have come what seemed an actual knowledge of the great cruel world outside—a knowledge which had been bought, too, by bitter suffering.

However, grandma's disclosures afforded the information that the girl had not always lived in this quiet home, so a wider sweep was given to Georgia's imagination, though she did not succeed in arriving at any fixed conclusions, could not even get far enough to decide whether her idea, that Phillis had somewhere borne pain and trouble, had any foundation, or was merely the outgrowth of her own fancy.

CHAPTER IV.

WE should all be ready enough to admit that, if we look at a landscape through a coloured glass, its appearance must vary according to the tint of the lens employed, and we might also magnanimously acknowledge, that whether the spectacles were rose-hued or azure, in neither case should we have seen the real colour of the objects, and could only do so by regarding them with the naked eye.

But we are all beautifully oblivious of the fact, that we regard our fellow-men, whether we rank them under the head of friends, enemies, or indifferent acquaintances, through the medium of our personal prejudices, favourable or otherwise—and the unfortunate part of the business is, that we cannot throw aside our mental spectacles at will. The consequence is obvious, yet it does not affect our feelings towards the person, nor control the glibness with which we pronounce judgment, though we can perceive plainly enough the blunder other people make

in studying friends or enemies by the same means.

Georgia Grosvenor was neither more nor less reasonable than the rest of us, and each time that she met Denis Bourke she unconsciously tried to find characteristics in him which would coincide with the opinion she had formed on the night of her arrival. During the first few days he came to the house every morning or evening, then his visits grew less frequent, and very often when he did come, he forebore to intrude his presence upon Miss Grosvenor. But she was greatly annoyed whenever she discovered that he and Phillis had been together, for, as acquaintance increased her admiration for her new companion, she naturally disliked more and more the idea of this clever, brilliant creature being deluded into the belief that she could care for the great awkward man whom chance had flung in her path. So determined was Georgia to decide that such caring would be a waste of mind and sentiment on Phillis's part, that she would not for an instant contemplate the possibility, that destiny itself might have arranged this matter of propinquity.

When she did meet Bourke, she never conversed with him except upon the most ordinary subjects, stedfast to her credence, that what education he possessed must be of the narrowest and most superficial kind. When, now and then, in her hearing he grew earnest in discussion with Phillis, or interested in some talk with grandma,

and enunciated sentiments which showed both culture and thought, Georgia hastily added another prop to her preconceived opinions, by assuring herself that he had probably been reading an editorial in some journal, and was appropriating its eloquence.

Now that he had apparently determined to cease any effort to cultivate her acquaintance, she seemed to have lost the power of rendering him uncomfortable, and he got over that trick of turning red and awkward in the odd fashion which had so perplexed her, because she could never decide whether it meant shyness or a repulsion responsive to her own. She scornfully admitted that the change was an improvement, since he appeared less like an overgrown schoolboy going up for punishment; but gradually a certain sense of strength and sustained purpose which pervaded his conversation began to irk her; though, why the fact of his proving a man who could not be laughed at, or his opinions disregarded, should have this effect, was a puzzle she could only elucidate by putting it down to the account of her fears for Phillis.

That astute young woman said nothing. Mr Bourke would have had reason to regard her as a very lukewarm friend, could he have known the manner in which she received the sage counsels Miss Grosvenor bestowed upon her, Of course she was never guilty of the impertinence of attempting to advise or caution Phillis French; but she generalised a great deal upon

the folly of girls throwing themselves away—fancying men beneath them in intellect and education — and the petty and unendurable miseries which must be the consequence of such insanity. Phillis French listened, and her eyes brightened with fun, but she gave no other sign of perceiving that the wisdom was meant to apply to her own special case.

Then Miss Grosvenor began to discover that the offensive young man held certain theories which she stigmatised as communistic, contrary to all received doctrines of law and order. One night, when she entered the parlour and heard him expounding his ideas to Phillis, she could not resist an onslaught upon his false premises and (what she considered) his borrowed sophistries. He defended his position, and before Georgia knew it, she got deep in a controversy, and too much interested and excited to remember how completely she was breaking down the barrier of restraint and ceremonious civility wherewith she had hitherto hedged in their intercourse.

He talked so eloquently, and his views were so original to her at least, that now and then she even forgot to make use of her own weapons, and listened with as much pleasure as grandma and Phillis, and when she did cut and thrust, she perceived that she had found a foe too strong for her, even though she brought in as allies all the conservative principles and precepts which memory and reading could summon to her aid.

Phillis French said just enough to urge them both on and heighten their interest. After Mr Bourke took his leave, Georgia discovered that she had enjoyed the evening very much, and felt proportionably indignant with the gentleman therefor.

"Grandma," said Phillis, "Master Denis has found his tongue again."

"And he talks well, does he not, Georgia?" the old lady asked.

"Oh, yes," Miss Grosvenor assented, rather grudgingly. "But I never heard such horrible theories outside of the orations of some German Internationalist Society."

"Yet Christ taught the doctrine of general brotherhood," observed grandma softly; and of course Miss Grosvenor could say no more.

But when the old lady had retired Georgia could not resist adding, "There is no creature so arrogant as a self-made man."

"So I have read in foreign novels," Phillis French answered demurely.

"I suppose Mr Bourke thinks the rich men in the States ought to be obliged to give up their property to the control of himself and his fellow fanatics," continued Georgia; "he has only to go a little further and he will be ready to burn barns like English rioters, by way of preparing himself for Parisian communistic performances on a grand scale."

"To judge from what he has already done, I

should say he would stop at nothing," returned Phillis.

"What has he done?" asked Georgia. "Got himself into very bad odour with all the sound, substantial men of the neighbourhood, no doubt."

"I think he has," said Phillis, "with some of them at least."

"I suppose he has been pointing out that it is their duty to divide their goods among him and his associates."

"No; only offering a practical example. He has a large farm and a coal mine, and he manages them on a sort of co-operative plan. I don't understand much about it, but I dare say you would, if you could get him to explain his ideas."

Miss Grosvenor signified by an expressive gesture that not for worlds would she listen to any such exposition from the misguided young man, but she only said,—

"Perhaps when he is quite ruined he will perceive the falsity of his creeds."

"I don't know. You say yourself he is the most obstinate man you ever met," Phillis replied.

"At all events, he will probably soon have the opportunity of finding out that his theories are rather expensive to carry into execution," said Georgia.

"I don't know that either," Phillis French answered. "So far, his plan works well enough —even what you call the sound, substantia

portion of the community admits that. I don't suppose he makes much money, but at least he loses none."

Georgia knew by the quick, indolent tones that Phillis French wished to irritate her into further energetic condemnation of Mr Bourke and his errors, so she retired from the subject with a stateliness which had the effect of making her friend laugh outright, though she would give no explanation as to the reason of her merriment when asked therefor.

For a day or two Miss Grosvenor settled down on the belief that Denis Bourke was a lunatic or a demagogue, either qualifying himself for an insane asylum, or preparing the way to become the Congressional candidate for the Working Man's party—not that Georgia knew very well what this might mean, but something subversive to law and order, she felt confident.

The conversation of the evening appeared to have dissipated a portion of Mr Bourke's fears, that the town lady found his visits a bore, for during the next few days he was a good deal at the house. Georgia formed numerous dignified resolutions, yet he never came without her finding herself drawn into an argument, for they seldom agreed upon any topic; but she had to admit that he talked well and possessed intelligence of no common order.

She took her revenge by discarding the possible excuse of lunacy in his behalf, and accepted the theory of his being a demagogue, and one

night got so heated in discussion that she told him as much. She was shocked at the speech, which amused the others, and the contrition her politeness, if not her conscience, forced her to confess, went far towards carrying their acquaintance on to familiar and amicable intercourse.

One after another numerous instances of his kindness and generosity came to her knowledge, and she began to wonder how it happened that she could have passed three weeks in his vicinity and heard so little—forgetting that his name had been tacitly an almost tabooed subject in her presence.

She did not even know where he lived. The road to his farm led up a very steep hill, which she had not yet had strength to climb, and when she and Phillis drove out, the latter always avoided the route, declaring it beyond the wind and strength of Bones, the pony; though I doubt if Phillis French was quite honest in this declaration. She so hugely enjoyed Georgia's blunders and misconceptions, that she prolonged them by every means in her power, and delighted in the series of surprises which each day brought to the young lady, reserving the sight of Denis Bourke in his own house as the crowning stroke.

One afternoon Miss Grosvenor set forth on a solitary ramble, and took her way through certain fields, which she knew possessed stiles and gates, that would render her progress easy enough. Unfortunately, a black bull belonging

to Farmer Petherick, whose lands adjoined those of Phillis French, had chosen this very afternoon to break out of his pasture and indulge in a promenade, and had selected the exact route selected by Miss Grosvenor, only in the inverse direction.

The charms of freedom had driven him as mad as any socialist ever condemned by Georgia and other conservatives, and he leaped and bellowed, and dashed recklessly at all objects, as if to his eyes everything, from a stump to a sheep, looked like a red rag. As Georgia approached from one quarter, the bull came plunging down a hill which she had intended to skirt; they caught sight of each other at the same instant. Georgia gave one shriek, and the bull one bellow; then they both stood still—Georgia because she was too frightened to stir, and the bull perhaps deciding whether he should most enjoy trampling her under his hoofs or tossing her on his horns, which appeared as big as young trees to Miss Grosvenor's terrified gaze.

Then, from a third point in the compass, descended a god, *ex machinâ*—no less than Mr Denis Bourke, carrying over his shoulder a huge umbrella nearly as large as a tent, which old Mrs Petherick had lent him a few evenings before, when overtaken by a storm near her house, and which, demagogue though he might be, he possessed honesty enough (very fortunately, as it happened for Georgia) to have the intention of restoring to its owner.

"Run for the stile!" he shouted; and Miss Grosvenor ran, so frightened, that she neither recognised him nor his voice—she had just sense enough left to obey the command.

But she was too blind to notice which direction she took, and got nowhere near the stile. She half climbed, half stumbled over a rail-fence, and as she was far from strong, physical weakness forced her to lie still where she fell.

Miss Grosvenor got her courage back, and waxed furious with herself for having been so alarmed; morally, she was a brave woman, but the bold spirit had been put inside a physique too delicate to be in keeping. She peered through the rails and perceived Denis Bourke; he had opened the great umbrella full in the bull's face, and the animal, with one ear-piercing bellow, turned tail and fled with the speed, if not the grace, of a deer.

There is nothing which terrifies man or beast like the unknown, and Georgia's enemy, being unacquainted with umbrellas, was as much scared by the sudden charge as you or I would be if the sun were to set at mid-day. With the lack of generosity common to mortals, Mr Bourke paused an instant to smile at the ridiculous figure presented by his vanquished combatant; then he crossed the field, and vaulted lightly over the fence.

Miss Grosvenor saw him coming, and managed to assume a sitting posture. She tried to rise, but the violent effort she had made had left her

so weak this was out of the question. However, in spite of feeling very sick and faint, she strove hard to look composed, aware that her attempt was less successful than she could have wished, though her head was too dizzy for her to suffer greatly from the humiliation.

"I hope you are not hurt?" Bourke cried.

"Not a bit," Georgia replied in gasps; "but I would rather have been. I was an idiot to have had such a fright for nothing."

"Scarcely for nothing," he answered, smiling at her manner; but when he got near enough to notice her pallor and the violence with which her heart was beating, he looked somewhat anxious.

"There certainly would have been reason if you had not come to my rescue," she said, recollecting that the least she could in decency do was to exhibit some sign of gratitude for his assistance. "I—I am so much obliged to you —I—"

"To my umbrella, you mean," he interrupted gaily, though still watching her with that expression of solicitude.

"I shall never go into a field again without being armed with the hugest one the land can supply," said Georgia. As she spoke, she tried again to rise, thinking the faintness had passed. But she tottered, put out her hands, and through the partial insensibility which paralysed mind and body, she was conscious of being lifted in Denis Bourke's arms and carried for some distance down the path.

When she could open her eyes and think clearly, she found herself seated on the turf, with her back against a tree, close to a little spring that bubbled up from under a moss-grown rock, and Denis Bourke was bathing her forehead. Presently she recovered voice to thank him, and declared her ability to walk home.

"You must sit still for awhile," he said, with a certain calm authority in his tone, which on any ordinary occasion might have roused Miss Grosvenor's ire, but just now she could not summon energy to offer the slightest opposition.

Indeed she was subdued enough to be thankful to have somebody near to give her a positive command—even if the speaker were Denis Bourke.

In a little time she got back to a more natural state of mind and body—could talk—even try to jest, by way of proving to herself and him that she had quite recovered.

"How I must have run!" she said, laughing. "I think I should have made an excellent model for a modern Atalanta."

He was careful not to laugh, and sufficiently wise to say—"The bull occupied me so entirely that I had no time to look. The first I saw of you was when I reached the fence. I rather think you must have flown."

"I tore one of my wings at all events," she said, holding up the dark brown ruffle which decorated her serviceable tussore gown.

"Luckily the rent is slight enough to be

repaired by a few pins judiciously applied," he answered.

"Yes, but I have no pins. I must tie the ends up in some fashion, else I shall trip over them in walking."

He produced a tiny flat cushion from his coat-pocket, well furnished with the requisite articles. This proof of methodical habit and care was so out of keeping with Georgia's idea of his character and blundering ways, that astonishment prevented her remembering that a man given to such old bachelor tricks had always been as abhorrent to her as one who wore galoshes.

"Confess you wouldn't have given me credit for so much foresight," said he. "P. French gave me this pincushion, so I always carry it."

"Oh," said Georgia, and began arranging her plumage. Even at this moment, when feeling better disposed towards him than she had ever done, she did not like to be reminded of the terms of intimacy upon which he stood with her pretty Phillis.

He watched the operation of mending the ruffle for a little, then he said,—

"You don't use half pins enough. Now, is it because you can't bear to touch anything which belongs to me, or because it vexes you that Phillis French should condescend even to make me so trifling a gift?"

If a mole, which just then skurried past, had spoken and informed her that the bow on her hat was scarlet, Miss Grosvenor could not have

been more astounded! This man had perceptions sufficiently keen and delicate to have so far penetrated her sentiments during the past weeks, that he could correctly interpret even so slight a sign as she had just given. Georgia felt herself colour—an additional betrayal.

"I have a conscience; I did not wish to rob you," she said, laughing, rather nervously.

"Oh, you can give me back the pins when we get to the house," returned he; "but if you were to rob me of P. French's friendship, you could not restore it."

He was laughing too when he began to speak, but before he finished, his voice sounded grave—slightly reproachful. Georgia would have liked to grow angry; she could not. The man and everything about him seemed to present itself in a new light; for the first time she really respected him. He could be bold even to audacity, if his rights were infringed, and she admired this quality.

She rose; he stood looking full at her; she looked full at him, for she was not a woman to shrink from any position in which her own words or acts placed her, though it had been a thousand times more difficult.

"I might not be able," she said, "whether I try or not, will depend upon yourself."

"What can I do?" he asked. "You don't like me, and you won't get acquainted with me."

"I promise to do my share towards that last, if you wish it," she replied.

"Then that's an agreement," he exclaimed. He held out his hand, then partially drew it back. Georgia waited a second; if he had appeared confused, she would have been cruel enough to disregard his hesitation. But he was looking full in her face still—not angrily, not defiantly—with that dogged determination she had so often noticed, which just now she rather approved. Half against her will she extended her hand; he took it, but did not press her fingers, and the distinction was to her a fresh proof that she had slandered him when she pronounced his perceptions dull and coarse.

Not another word on that subject was exchanged; they began at the same instant to speak of indifferent matters. Before they reached the house he was telling her about buckwheat-growing, *apropos* to some question she asked, and their whole conversation remained as friendly and commonplace as possible.

So it came about that Phillis French, standing in the porch in front of her dwelling, saw the pair come up the path. The sight filled her with such amused astonishment that a vent therefor she must find, and as she would not for worlds have betrayed her surprise to Georgia, she stepped back, and fairly shook her grandmother to and fro in her chair.

"You crazy child, you've made me drop a stitch," said the dear old lady, too much accustomed to her grand-daughter's eccentricities even to ask what had occasioned this outburst.

"You may be thankful I didn't pinch you granny," whispered Phillis. "Only look—look!"

Grandma peered out through the screen of green leaves, and nodded her headed intelligently, with a pleasant smile. Phillis French, having relieved her mind, moved forward and received the new-comers with the innocence of a dove.

"I am glad you have brought Denis Bourke with you, Georgia," said she; "I want him to mend my hoe-handle."

"Mr Bourke brought me," returned Georgia. "We have had a fight with old Uncle Petherick's black bull; he wanted to toss me on his horns, and Mr Bourke declined to allow him that satisfaction."

Grandma was rather alarmed, and very sympathetic. Phillis shared in the latter sentiment for a few moments, then began to teaze Bourke upon his prowess, vowing that she should buy, beg or steal the big umbrella of Mrs Petherick, and set it up in the hall as a tutelar goddess, to be saluted solemnly by Georgia and Denis each time they passed.

But when Bourke was gone, and Miss Grosvenor got away to her room, Phillis French rubbed her hands in glee, and had a long, hearty laugh to herself. In the meantime Georgia, in the solitude of her chamber, sat reflecting with a good deal of wonder upon the fact of her having entered into an amicable compact with that self-made man—that socialist—that demagogue—Denis Bourke! But the most surprising thing

of all was, that she could not regret it so much as she should have expected to do, had any Cassandra prophesied the occurrence an hour before it happened.

"I'll be just at all events; I begin to believe I have not been," she thought. "If I have misjudged and undervalued him, I shall tell Phillis so frankly—and if she likes him—well— But, oh dear, I wanted something so different for her!"

At this juncture her reverie was interrupted by the voice of that young lady outside her door, and Miss Grosvenor was obliged to put by her reflections till a more convenient season.

CHAPTER V.

FOR a couple of days after the adventure with Farmer Petherick's bull, it struck Georgia that Phillis French had lost her ordinary spirits. She kept so constantly occupied that grandma and Miss Grosvenor scarcely saw her from morning till night, and when she did sit down with them, was either too tired to talk, or else so restless and excited, that her gaiety seemed unnatural.

But grandma appeared to notice nothing unusual in her manner, and Georgia of course concealed her suspicion, that the recurrence of some anniversary or other troublesome reminder of the past, had given a shock to the cheerful equanimity wherewith the girl accepted her present existence. And yet Georgia had to admit that Phillis French went beyond patient acceptance of her destiny. She was full of health and strength, and evidently thoroughly enjoyed her life; she liked managing the house, and delighted in her farm. Indeed, she was in every way a riddle,

which this present phase of character only added to the difficulty of solving.

On the third evening, Denis Bourke came to the Nest; he had been in and out several times in the course of these days, and once Georgia had seen him and Phillis walking through the fields. But on this occasion he spent a couple of hours, and, even to Miss Grosvenor, his presence proved a pleasant addition to their little home group.

Apropos to some remark he made about his place, Georgia observed that she did not yet know just where he lived; whereupon Phillis, who had been sitting apart almost in silence, cried out,—

"You shall invite us to a high tea, Denis Bourke. There is an honour! Grandma will be glad of an opportunity to flirt with you, and Miss Grosvenor and I can play propriety. Let me see, to-morrow won't do, I shall be busy, so we will set Thursday. Be sure you give us waffles, for your Tabitha makes them to perfection. What do you say, Georgia, shall we gratify this benighted young man by accepting his invitation?"

"I have heard none given, except by you," replied Georgia, laughingly.

"Oh, I should be so glad if you would come!" cried Bourke with eagerness. "You must not expect a poor bachelor's den to be in such order as this house, you know!"

"Don't trouble yourself to give superfluous

information!" responded Phillis French, before Miss Grosvenor could speak. "But wouldn't you suffer if Tabitha or Patrick heard you, when they are wearing their precious lives out in care for you and your belongings? We will pay him the visit, Georgia; that is settled."

"I should like it very much," said Georgia.

"That is superfluous also, after my saying we were to go," retorted Phillis French. "Grandma, don't encourage insubordination by tittering in the corner. Really all you thoughtless young people are a great worry to me. If I'd not the makings of a saint in my disposition, I don't know how I should support my burdens."

She rushed without warning into one of her wildest, most nonsensical moods, and forced them all to laugh and be merry; so genuinely gay herself, that Georgia inclined to think her impression that the girl had been troubled or in low spirits, a mere figment of her own imagination. Thursday proved a beautiful day, and towards sunset the three ladies started to fulfil their engagement.

Mrs Davis could seldom be persuaded to trust herself in a carriage, but this afternoon she consented to do so, on condition that one of the farm horses was substituted for the pony; a lack of confidence in that mischievous animal which Phillis French declared would break his heart and spirit if the slow, ugly quadruped put in his place should boast of the honour, as no doubt

he would on the first convenient occasion, and be so set up too by his own advancement as quite to ruin him for his rightful position in life.

Denis Bourke's farm lay a mile and a-half off by the highway, though a path across the fields and through the wood greatly lessened the distance for any pedestrian equal to the exertion of climbing the steep hill near the little lake,—a feat which of course the dear old grandmother could not attempt.

The road branched off from the main route not far beyond the Nest, gave a sharp turn to the left, skirted the wood and lake, then wound up a long ascent, on the summit of which a poplar-lined lane led to Bourke's habitation—an ambitious stone mansion, with a turret and a collonnade, but wearing a somewhat gloomy aspect, in contrast to Phillis's bower-like domain.

The appearance of the house surprised Georgia, and she showed it. Grandma explained that the dwelling had been erected many years before by some gentleman as a summer home; it had stood vacant for a long time after his death, and Denis Bourke had bought the house and large farm attached at a very moderate rate.

Then Georgia caught a quizzical smile on Phillis French's face, and was vexed that she had broken over a rule she had made herself, never to ask a question in regard to the young man.

As they drove up Bourke appeared in the verandah, followed by a couple of beautiful dogs,

whose possession Miss Grosvenor began envying on the instant.

He helped the ladies out of the carriage, but beyond a cordial welcome, had no leisure to pay any attention to his two youthful guests until he had conducted grandma indoors, and established her in an easy-chair in the wide entrance-hall, which Georgia observed was furnished like a living-room, after a fashion very common in English country-houses, a fact which occasioned her a second sensation of surprise.

"Miss Phillis," said Bourke, when satisfied that he had done all he could to render his ancient friend comfortable, "if there's anything you young ladies want to do to yourselves, Tabitha will take you upstairs."

"Our best thanks for your elegantly expressed proposal," returned she, "but our paint does not rub off easily, and we can lay our hats on the table; it is too hot to attempt any unnecessary exertion."

"It was very, very good of you to come, Miss Grosvenor," said Bourke.

"She knows that," cried the incorrigible Phillis.

"Very good of you, Mr Bourke, to allow that naughty girl to bring us," added Georgia.

"And you have spoiled my nice speech, Miss Phillis," he continued, laughing; "I had it all learned by heart, and you've put it quite out of my head."

"Hearts and heads have nothing to do with

each other," pronounced Phillis French. "But I will give you an opportunity to try and remember your poetical effort. Since I had neither part nor lot therein, I shall go and pay my respects to Tabitha, perhaps you will have finished your blank verse by the time I get back."

"You had your welcome a great while since, and you know very well that it was for once and always," he called after her, as she ran laughing down the hall.

"What an exquisitely pretty creature she is!" Georgia involuntarily exclaimed as they stood looking after her.

"Yes," Bourke answered, adding, in the same breath, "Did you notice my two dogs, Miss Grosvenor? Here, Ponto! Hi, Pagan! come and offer your paws in your most gentlemanly fashion."

His hasty dismissal of her friend's name did not please Georgia. While patting the graceful animals, and expressing her admiration of them, she was mentally repeating—

> "*He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent*
> *its novel force,*
> *Something better than his dog, a little dearer than*
> *his horse.*"

What a fate to befall her bright bewitching Phillis! And it would, if she were to marry this man, Georgia felt sure of that. Then she suddenly remembered the compact she had entered into—her promise to defer decisions in

regard to his character until she should know him better. She had forgotten it already, and she glanced up into his face with a somewhat remorseful consciousness of the fact.

It struck her for the first time how much and how determinedly she had hitherto underrated his personal appearance. Assuredly he had no pretensions to beauty, but the expression of his countenance was singularly frank and pleasant, and the brow and head might have belonged to a person with far higher claims to intellectual superiority than anything short of positive proofs would have inclined Georgia to credit Denis Bourke.

She had seated herself in a low easy-chair to play with the dogs, who met her advances most graciously ; and, after a few words concerning his two pets, and begging her not to let them become troublesome, Bourke turned towards grandma again, and commenced talking about farming matters, the weather, and other kindred subjects.

It was evident that he did not mean to bore Miss Grosvenor by unnecessary attentions, even while her host, and she reflected with a little compunction that her manner would always have given him reason to suspect that she should appreciate such consideration. But, after all, the whole thing might be her fancy ; perhaps he had turned to grandma to hide a sudden fit of shyness. Because he had shown physical strength and courage on one occasion, for which she had reason to be grateful, and finer perceptions of

her sentiments in regard to his relations with Phillis than she would have expected him to display, it was not necessary to prove her gratitude or express her contrition by going to the opposite extreme, and endowing him with mental refinement and a power of subtle insight lacking in plenty of clever men accustomed to a sphere of life very different from any which Denis Bourke could have known.

So she put aside her self-reproaches, and began to listen again to the conversation between grandma and the young man. He was telling a story—telling it very well, too, Georgia noticed, until he perceived that she had become his auditor also; then a certain dramatic element he had thrown into his narrative died out, and the closing portion was given rather tamely, he glancing towards her now and then, not so much with the air of wishing to include her as a listener, as if to see whether she were inclined to be a severe critic.

Presently Georgia rose and strolled through the corridor, looking at some prints which hung on the walls,—good ones, too,—and she marvelled if he could have chosen them. At last she came upon an engraving which her practised eye recognised as a Gainsborough, and stood quite confounded at the idea of finding such a treasure in a Pennsylvania farm-house. Probably its possessor had not the slightest idea of its value, but the wonder was, where he could have picked it up. There must be a story connected with

that portrait of some long dead and gone beautiful woman; it must have found its way across seas years before, brought, perhaps, by a lineal descendant of the superb patrician creature, and the changes of fortune had flung it into the hands of the print-dealers.

Though that could hardly be either, since such persons would have known its worth, and demanded a price as much beyond the reach of Denis Bourke's purse as the engraving itself was beyond his appreciation—cultivated appreciation, Georgia meant—for the attaining which his life could have offered no opportunities. Then she recollected what grandma had told her about the former owner of the house—the print had probably been disregarded or forgotten by his heirs, and Bourke had inherited it.

Just as she reached this satisfactory conclusion, Phillis peeped in through the glass door which opened upon the lawn and garden at the back of the house, glanced towards her grandmother and Bourke engaged in conversation, and called to Georgia to come and join her.

Three stately stone pine-trees stood in the centre of the grass plot, and beneath them were arranged some rustic chairs and a table. Beyond, reaching to the brow of the hill, from whence a ziz-zag path led down to the lake, spread an extensive garden, bright with flowers. To the right of the verandah was a long trellis, covered with grape vines, which hid the kitchen; further down were some beehives, then came a

dovecote, the whole as pretty and tasteful as if the owner of the place had been a poet instead of a farmer.

The view of the valley and mountains was glorious, but Georgia had learned to expect that at every point of sight in this picturesque region. Just now, admirer of nature though she was, her thoughts were occupied with her new and inconsistent speculations concerning the man who had chosen this lovely retreat for his home, though, after all, she quickly told herself it might have been merely the moderate terms offered, not its beauty, which had attracted him.

However, her curiosity was so strongly excited that she could not forbear a few questions, even at the risk of exposing herself to Phillis French's merciless raillery, by again breaking through her rule of behaving as if she never recollected the existence of Denis Bourke, unless he happened to be present.

"I suppose Mr Bourke is an American by birth, in spite of his Irish name?" said Georgia, with a little yawn.

"Mr Bourke was born in Italy," replied Phillis, yawning too; but her answer astounded Georgia too much for her to notice the mimicry.

"Why, P. French, you never told me that!" she cried.

"You never asked me," said Phillis.

"But how long has he been in this country?"

"Seven years; no, six years, eight months, and some days."

By the tone of Phillis's voice Georgia knew that the girl was in one of her teazing moods, and perceived, too, that she was herself in a mood to be teazed. She preferred to let her curiosity remain ungratified rather than afford Phillis an opportunity for mischievous exultation at her suddenly regarding Denis Bourke of sufficient consequence to institute inquiries about. She would ask nothing more.

"This place is almost as pretty as your Nest," said she; "only it is not so bright and cheerful."

"It would be if I lived in it," returned Phillis French. "That careless fellow has dropped a book on the grass; the dew will begin to fall presently and ruin it."

She stooped under the table and picked up the volume.

"Spinoza, in the original Latin," she continued, glancing at the title. "You see, Master Denis has got beyond the horn-book in his reading; you'd hardly have believed it, would you?"

"I never thought about the matter," said Georgia.

Phillis French treated her to one of her mocking peals of laughter, opened the book at the fly-leaf, and held it before Miss Grosvenor's eyes. On the page was written Bourke's name, below it a date of a number of years back, with the word Cambridge attached.

"You see there is the aristocratic O' to help him on towards respectability, though one makes no distinction between his cognomen and vulgar

Bourke in pronouncing it," said Phillis. "Only think how much nicer I should have been if I were entitled to dignify French with a second f!"

It was the first time Phillis French had betrayed her perception of certain unrepublican weaknesses in regard to birth and station, which Georgia was quite aware of possessing; but of which somehow, at this instant, she felt a little ashamed.

The approach of Denis Bourke himself relieved her from the necessity of finding a reply.

"Patrick has ordered me to bring you in to supper," said he; "and I am sure grandma is tired, and wants a cup of tea."

As they were passing through the hall, Georgia paused to glance again at the print which had attracted her attention.

"I think you will own you scarcely ever saw a better Gainsborough, Miss Grosvenor?" said Bourke.

"Never," she remarked; but saw Phillis regarding her with such mischievous consciousness of the series of astonishments of which she had been the subject since entering the house, that she would not ask a single question.

Bourke ushered them into a long, low room, where the supper table was spread and grandma already seated.

"Patrick said I was to sit here," she observed, "and he would not hear of my standing up till you came in."

"I should think not," said Bourke.

The exquisite whiteness of the linen, and the appetising appearance of the viands, did not surprise Miss Grosvenor. Phillis had often praised to her the talents of Bourke's cook and housekeeper; but she could hardly credit Mistress Tabitha with the arrangement of the flowers, or the taste which had presided over the furnishing of the apartment. While wondering if she must attribute these details to Mr Bourke's unaided skill, she saw an old man, who might have just stepped out of one of Cruikshank's illustrations of Irish characters, place before Phillis a huge silver tray, whereon stood an urn and other articles of plate, which she perceived must date back at least a century, and were decorated with a crest.

The servant set his burden down, surveyed the group with an air of pride, and said to Phillis French, in a perfectly audible whisper,—

"I've brought out the tay-pot and all the accessories, Miss Phaylis. An' Misther Dinis had his way, they'd stop in a bog till they was black as my boot, savin' your prisence; but what's the good of me breaking me hand wid rubbin' them bright, av' we're not to show the town lady what we was born and bred to, an' we do live in a Yankee farm-house, and—"

"Where are the waffles, Patrick?" called Bourke, breaking in upon his confidences.

"I'm afther bringin' them, sir," replied Patrick, and retired with great dignity.

His disappearance afforded Phillis French an

opportunity to laugh, and the rest joined in her merriment.

"I don't wonder Patrick is proud of his silver," said Georgia. "That urn is a marvel, and the chasing on the salver perfectly exquisite."

Bourke returned some slight answer, and began to devote himself to grandma's comfort; but it was plain that he felt annoyed. Of course the old servant's remark could not have displeased him; so it must be that he did not like this producing articles which were certainly out of keeping with his present mode of life. When or where they could have been appropriate, Georgia found herself marvelling, even while listening and replying to Phillis French's brilliant sallies, that young lady having begun to talk very fast upon the first subject she could seize hold of.

Somehow it was a comfort to Georgia, as the meal went on, to observe that Patrick performed his service in a very reckless and Hibernian fashion, fraught with peril to the dishes and the attire of the guests. Georgia had the grace to feel ashamed of the sensation which she knew arose from a fear of having to consider Denis Bourke as a hero of romance, accompanied by the traditional treasure of an old family servitor who had clung to his fallen fortunes, but her shame did not hinder her satisfaction. And after all, the possession of a quantity of antique silver did not necessarily argue lofty descent on the part of its owner. There was plenty such

to be bought! The most natural conclusion seemed that Denis Bourke possessed more money than she had supposed.

Georgia, like everybody else, good and noble as were many of her qualities, was unwilling to relinquish her prejudices. In order to do so, she must admit that her perspicacity had signally failed for once, and though theoretically we know and own that it is well for self to be humbled, the practical endurance thereof is highly unpleasant. But Georgia had more of the humbling process to undergo before the visit ended. After supper they went into the apartments on the opposite side of the hall.

"This is my favourite den, Miss Grosvenor," said Bourke; "you'll be shocked at its heterogenous appearance, but a bachelor has no need of a drawing-room."

The use of that one word revealed a good deal to Georgia. Eight Americans out of ten would have said "parlour." She must have had opportunities to notice scores of similar slight, yet convincing, evidence of his foreign education, yet had remained blind thereto. And she had always so hugely prided herself on an ability to decide, after a very brief conversation, upon the social status and early associations of the people she encountered, no matter what their surroundings might be; as proud of her readiness to recognise a gentleman or lady, though in a hood, as of her quickness to detect the coarse native metal under all the plating which years of

wealth or power had given the dweller in a palace.

The furniture in the room was of the simplest description. The chairs and lounges were either of wicker or covered with chintz, but the colours in keeping; the general effect harmonious, picturesque even. There were books, stags' heads, more prints, photographs, and one portrait, that of a very beautiful woman, bearing a certain family likeness to the Gainsborough in the hall.

"Who does that resemble?" Phillis asked, coming behind Georgia, as she stood looking at the picture.

"No one I ever saw. It reminds me of the print."

"The print was the likeness of Denis Bourke's great aunt, and this is the portrait of his mother," said Phillis. Then she called, "Mr Bourke, who is this portrait like?"

"Like Miss Grosvenor," he answered; "I told you so the other day."

"I don't know where you find the resemblance," said Georgia.

"Now, don't say you don't know you are handsome!" cried Phillis, stamping her foot.

"I do know that people call me so," replied Georgia composedly; "but the features in that picture are exquisitely regular, and mine are the contrary."

"But it does look like you," said Mrs Davis; "it is the expression of the eyes, I think."

To end the discussion, Georgia spoke of a photograph of a fine old castle which hung near.

"What place is that, Mr Bourke?" she asked.

"It's a house in Ireland," he answered.

"It's his uncle's place, where Misther Dinis lived when he was a bye," added Phillis, mimicing old Patrick's voice and accent.

Georgia had undergone surprises enough for one evening; she rejoiced when grandma announced that it was time to drive homewards.

Just before separating for the night, Phillis said, "Well, Georgina, Georgette! for the third time, What do you think of my neighbour? He was born in Naples—he grew up in an Irish castle—he was educated at Cambridge, and he is a farmer in Pennsylvania?"

"And the fact that he is so, hinders even the respect which one might feel for him if he had been a poor, friendless boy, who had managed to become educated and decently well off through his own exertions," Georgia replied unhesitatingly, and with cold severity.

Just as you or I would. Miss Grosvenor wanted to have her revenge on Denis Bourke, because she discovered that her first judgment in regard to him had been a proof of her own blindness.

"Dear me!" cried Phillis French. "Explain yourself, G. G.!"

"The fact that with fair talents, good birth, health, and a classical education, he can settle down contentedly to a narrow, aimless life, in-

stead of making for himself a useful and honourable career, is a convincing proof that he has either forfeited his rightful station by misconduct, or is hopelessly and wickedly indolent."

"Clear, precise, and covers the whole ground!" returned Phillis French in high delight. "My dear, you are adorable! Doctor Johnson liked a good hater. I like a person who can stick to prejudices. You show positive genius in finding so quickly new and solid ground to sustain yours. Most people would have been a little stunned by having the old supports so suddenly knocked away, but not you! Good-night, fair charmer, pleasant dreams!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE next day Denis Bourke called at the house on his way to the Cormers, as the little group of houses beyond the railway station was called, though its possession of several shops, a post-office, and a Dissenting chapel might have entitled it to a more ambitious name, had the inhabitants been as careful of their dignity as the population of an American hamlet ordinarily is.

Bourke declared himself in a great hurry, but notwithstanding this statement, he sat for some time in the porch with the three ladies, though he could not have pleaded the excuse that the conversation, pleasant as it was, whiled him into forgetfulness of his duties, for Phillis more than once reminded him thereof with good-natured malice.

Grandma was knitting as usual; Miss Grosvenor busy finishing up a sketch; and Phillis French, for a wonder, sitting with folded hands; but as she had been on her feet since five o'clock, and it was now late in the afternoon, the most

strenuous partisan of industry might have considered her idleness excusable.

One of Georgia's grievances against Denis Bourke was his being so literal and matter of fact. It had not yet occurred to her that she laid herself open to the charge of inconsistency, by bestowing so much thought even of a disparaging nature upon a person whom, either on one ground or another, she elected to regard as insignificant, always excepting the possible chance of his fastening Phillis's whole future down to the level of his work-a-day existence. But whatever foundation there might be for her strictures, he certainly possessed imagination enough to appreciate the pretty picture which met his eyes as he walked up the path and saw the group in the verandah.

The great masses of blossoming woodbine cast a dense shade, and in the soft gloom he saw grandma in her quaker-coloured draperies and close white cap, looking like an image of peace and rest, beautiful with that beauty of old age which is so touching. Miss Grosvenor, handsomer than he had ever seen her, from the flush in her cheeks, and Phillis, a model of lazy, or more correctly, tired grace.

"I hope your visit did not fatigue you, Miss Grosvenor?" Denis said, after he had greeted grandma with the respectful affection he always showed her.

"Thanks; I enjoyed it too much for that," Georgia answered, bestowing a smile upon him,

—a mark of favour she had seldom vouchsafed hitherto, as Phillis reflected when she caught it, and wondered if Denis noticed the change. A rapid glance at his face showed her that he had.

Presently Cinders called her young mistress away; grandma fell into a doze over her knitting, and Miss Grosvenor and Bourke were left to their own devices. A week ago he would have got up and taken his leave, and she would have expected him to, but he kept his seat now, and she could not regard his doing so in the light of a liberty, as she most certainly would have done in the earlier days of her visit.

She felt a strong desire to know what chain of circumstances could have led him to choose this mountain retreat for his residence, and how it happened that, reared and educated as he had been, he should have settled down into his present occupation. It was useless, she had discovered, to question Phillis French; either the young lady knew nothing about the reasons, else she chose to punish Georgia for her previous slighting disregard of Bourke, by appearing unconscious of her curiosity, or by giving replies as void of tangible significance as if she had been a Delphic oracle.

Some remark he offered gave Georgia an opening to observe,—

"Miss French tells me you were born in Italy."

"In Naples," he replied; "but the fact has

not made me very Italian, you perceive. I lived there till I was about six. One of the first things I remember is nearly getting drowned in the bay at Torrento.

"Association would have rendered it more poetical than the same risk over at Podgers's Pond?" said she.

"Yes, I suppose so," he replied hesitatingly, evidently trying to trace what comparison personal to him was implied. Then he added, in his matter-of-fact way, "But the thing itself would be the same, you see."

He had no imagination, this man. Somehow, his lack in this particular exasperated Georgia as sorely as if it were owing to his own fault.

"The pretty southern accent must have been your earliest language," she remarked.

"Yes; but I can't talk it now; I have no gift in the way of foreign tongues—in speaking them, I mean. I hate Italy! I was back there some six years ago, but I only went because I was obliged to."

A man who hated Italy, and worse than all, avowed the enormity with a kind of savage satisfaction, oh, he certainly deserved to pass his life toiling on a farm. Podgers's Pond was a fitting appellation for a sheet of water that he looked out over daily; it was only a pity that the little lake had not been as prosaic as its name! But he should not drag Phillis down to his level; some means of hindering that should be found; though what special destiny

Georgia expected to procure for her friend, if she disturbed the apparently very natural course of present events, did not appear, nor did she stop to be practical enough to consider.

"I suppose you think me a heathen?" he added presently, still with the air of turning something over in his mind.

"You must not blame me," she said, laughing; "to each his taste. I like Italy, you prefer Podgers's Pond."

"You will admit that, in its way, nothing could be prettier?"

"Oh, it is very pretty."

"Then I see it is the name you quarrel with? But if one were to follow out that theory, it would be impossible for a man to write poetry just because he was called Stokes."

Georgia saw she had no argument, but the consciousness only deepened her wish to make him comprehend that an educated man who could spend his youth as he was doing merited no mercy,—a desire incompatible with her decision, that the fact of his choosing such a life became proof positive that he was fit for nothing better.

Bourke continued pulling his moustache with a reflective air; suddenly he said,—

"I have got it at last! I am such a slow fellow, it always takes me a good while to follow you and P. French."

"Well?" questioned Georgia, curious to discover if he really had traced her thought.

"I couldn't think what you meant about the Bay of Naples and Podgers's Pond! It's my being willing to live in this out-of-the-way place that you were wondering over?"

He had fathomed her meaning. Now Georgia felt a little ashamed—felt almost that she had been rude.

"I fear you cannot find it a very satisfactory sort of life," she said rather commiseratingly, by way of making amends.

He began to laugh.

"I like it immensely," he said; "so does P. French! You see, Miss Grosvenor, there's nothing like having plenty of work to keep the cobwebs out of one's brains."

"There are a great many different kinds of work, however," she answered a little drily, amazed by his including Phillis's contentment with his own.

"But they all bring about pretty much the same result, so far as one's feelings are concerned," said he.

"That is scarcely the received opinion," she replied. "Mere physical labour must have a very different effect on the mind from some intellectual pursuit which would occupy all its faculties."

"That would depend on the man's mental culture, and the spirit in which the work was done," said he, calmly.

Georgia began really to grow interested now.

"I don't understand," she said.

"And I'm such a clumsy talker, that perhaps I can't explain what I mean. But you will admit that Burns wrote real poetry while he was ploughing his fields?"

"Oh, if a man is a poet!" she exclaimed, and heard plainly how ill-natured and unjust the scornful remark sounded.

"Or is educated, and able to appreciate poetry, he can find a good deal in his farming," said Bourke. "At least we have Horace's verdict therefor," he added, laughing again.

"Ah, but Horace chose his farm as a rest after intellectual labours which had given him fame and affluence," returned Georgia.

"But if he had chosen it before, he need not necessarily have been a clod because he was a farmer."

"I did not mean to say that. But I suppose you will own that writing books is a less prosaic business than hoeing corn?"

"All work is prosaic, regarded from one side —real work. Do you think Walter Scott got much mental satisfaction out of all those books written in his later life,—toiling against time, under the pressure of debts,—conscious that he was falling below the level of his former efforts, —as tired, physically, as any labourer that ever carried a hod, besides the fatigue of mind?"

"Still, the consciousness of what he had done —of his fame."

"The fame must have been a very poor satisfaction, then. But take lesser examples—the

men who toil and do not win eminence in their professions; the novel writers, who just earn money enough to put bread into their children's mouths; the lawyers, who fail to reach the woolsack; the politicians, who never succeed, don't you think the poetry must vanish out of their thoughts by forty?"

"Evidently you consider ambition a poor affair."

"No; it is only that I do not see it need necessarily take the shape of wanting to make a noise in the world."

"But a young man ought to have such faith in himself that he believes it is his place to lead men—to become a power," cried Georgia.

"Remember how many must stop in the rut, else there would be nobody enough in advance to lead. All I said was, that to the men who do not attain eminence in what are called intellectual pursuits, life must grow as prosaic as to the tiller of the ground—harder, because of the disappointments brought by lack of success."

"But to live out of the world, among ignorant people."

"One need not now-a-days. In this retired region, you will meet as many well-educated persons as in the same sized circle elsewhere; not with fashionable manners, maybe—but who that goes in what is called fashionable society does not rail against its vacuity? As for the famous people—well, their biographies show us that often their companionship could not have

been very pleasant to their families. A man may possess the faculty of pouring out wonderful verse, and yet live a most unpoetical life—be a sot, a brute, and a bad man in every way."

"Oh, poets are of course exceptions to general rules," said Georgia, and knew this remark was feebler than her first, but could think of no other. She was astounded at this new phase in which Bourke was presenting himself.

"They ought not to be. Those who show what are called the eccentricities of genius, only prove that their genius is incomplete; it looks oftener like a disease than anything else."

"Well, put the poets aside. Do you mean to tell me that a man ought not to aspire—ought not to desire position, celebrity?"

"I mean to say that I think the man who sets out simply to attain that end, is actuated by a very petty, selfish motive."

"But some achievement he must have in view—I mean, some noble aim."

"I agree with you; but what I maintain is, that any work well done is noble—that a life is not necessarily barren of fruits because it is quiet; that the desire to rush out into the world and cause a stir is no proof of intellectual superiority. The fact is, as education becomes general, the great difference in intellect disappears—will do so more and more."

"Oh!" exclaimed Georgia, aghast.

"You don't believe it! Take one instance. Fifty years ago a woman who could write a good

novel was a wonder; to-day hundreds can do it, and there are thousands quite as capable, if they chose to turn their energies in that direction."

"According to your theory, in a few centuries more everybody might be a Shakespeare or a Newton or a Mrs Browning."

"At all events, general mental activity would reach such a level growth that no man could stand out among his fellows, as Shakespeare did among his."

"Good gracious! do you bestow the creative faculty upon every human being?"

"Yes, I believe it is present in some form. The thing is, that now we only recognise it as such when it takes certain shapes. When mankind reaches a higher point of knowledge, there will be no little and no great, because there can be nothing insignificant as we get towards perfection; that is, the full development of all our faculties, and the right use thereof."

"Oh, according to that, the time will come when a milliner who makes a perfect bonnet, will be considered a poet just as much as if she had written a poem."

"Every human achievement ought to be a poem. Whether the making the bonnet was such would depend on the woman's mental cultivation. It all depends on the mind we bring into the work! You may put what Newton did into the blowing of soap-bubbles. Don't you see?"

"I believe I follow you, but I am rather

dazed! So you think that a cultivated woman ought to be quite content to make bonnets?"

"Why not? She is doing a necessary work, and when the world gets civilised enough to make education the ground of social distinction, she will have no call to dislike her occupation. It is not in reality physical labour that humanity girds against, it is the fact that it puts a man low in the social scale."

"I never thought of it in that way; yes, perhaps it is so."

"If one could fancy the world at that stage, when all people were really educated, a carpenter's shop could be just as agreeable a place, even intellectually, as any other room where cultivated persons were gathered."

"But the means of educating them all?"

"Ah, we must go on to the general brotherhood idea for that. When a man must employ his wealth merely as a means for the general good—when he who strives from any other motive is a monster—then the world will see all those fine things."

"An intellectual millenium," said Georgia.

"Just so! What is called the Christian religion has ruled the civilised world for eighteen hundred years, and has never yet been put into practice; it never will be, until that day comes."

He stopped, and laughed again.

"I need not talk you deaf," said he; "and after all, my theories won't convince you that a

man is not lacking in ambition or energy when he tills a farm."

"Hardly, if he does it from choice."

"Yet you would admit that one of these great English landowners is not wasting his life if he attends to his duties."

"Oh, the case is so different. Look at such a man's responsibilities—his influence—the good he can do to hundreds."

"Then it would not be worth while to do good to a few people? The influence would have no value, because confined to a narrow circle."

At this moment Phillis French's voice sounded in the hall.

"There!" cried Bourke. "Would she be happier with nothing to do? A waste of life, you think. She has time to read—she has interests—the neighbourhood affords her a half-dozen acquaintances with whom she has intellectual sympathies; how many more could she find, if she were a great heiress, in New York, or the wife of a rich English landowner?"

Phillis appeared at the instant and glanced rather curiously at the pair. Bourke was flushed and excited; Georgia looked perplexed.

"Hum!" thought Phillis French. "If G. G. has reached a point where she condescends to quarrel with him, their acquaintance is flourishing famously. Some fine day Miss Georgia will be as much astonished as Jonah was when he discovered that his gourd had grown into a tree."

"You see I am still inflicting Miss Grosvenor," said Bourke.

"I am glad you stopped. I want you to come and tell me if a horrid kind of beast that has appeared among my cabbages is likely to do them harm! it's as big as my little finger nail, and there are such lots of the creatures. Come too, G. G., and I'll give you some of my best uses as we go through the garden."

"You see, Miss Grosvenor—*dolce cum utile!*" laughed Bourke.

"I do believe I have been asleep!" exclaimed grandma, opening her eyes very wide, and looking round in astonishment.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO days passed without Denis Bourke's making his appearance at the Nest—a circumstance which greatly surprised Miss Grosvenor. Phillis French did not remark upon his absence, and Georgia wondered whether her silence rose from indifference, or a fear of betraying a suspicious interest in his movements.

"What has become of your neighbour?" she asked at length.

"It is my belief he has lost himself under a cabbage leaf," Phillis replied. "I have always warned him that such would be his fate. Did you quarrel with him the other day, G. G?"

"Our acquaintance is rather too recent for such a catastrophe to arrive," returned Georgia.

"Oh, is it contrary to etiquette to quarrel with people until you know them well?" Phillis demanded, with the serious air of a person desiring information upon some very important subject.

"Don't rush into one of your exasperating moods, miss," retorted Georgia.

Whereupon Phillis French chuckled—not as grown-up people do—but exactly like a year-old baby just learning how to get into mischief.

"Of course there was a time when I could not have ventured to hint that anything would induce your highness to do him that honour," she continued; "but I suppose you might now, since he has revealed that he was born in a castle instead of a cabin—or would have been, if he had happened to be at home when the interesting event took place."

"As you are not Irish, you need not make bulls," said Georgia.

"But did you quarrel?" Phillis persisted. "He looked very red when I interrupted your conversation, and you were knitting your brows portentously."

"I was doing nothing of the sort. I told you what we were talking about."

"Oh, yes, my dear, and I often tell you what I've been talking about, and show my powers of invention in so doing."

"P. French, I warn you that presently I shall pull your hairpins out, and let your hair down. That is the only threat I find which keeps you in order—it is too much for your patience to think for arranging all that masstwice in a morning."

"Is that spoiled child of mine worrying you, Miss Grosvenor?" asked grandma, from her easy chair in the window.

"As usual! But grandma, dear, I'll not have you call me by that ceremonious name—you promised not to do it."

"Then I won't again."

"Grandma's good at promises—she inherits the faculty from me," said Phillis, playfully, giving Georgia an affectionate smile at the same time, for her new friend's sweet attentions to the old lady had done more to win Phillis's regard than her beauty and elegance, potent as those spells had proved upon the imaginative girl.

"What has become of Denis Bourke?" asked grandma. "He has not been here yesterday or to-day."

"I suppose at this moment he is hunting a rope wherewith to hang himself," Phillis answered promptly. "Georgia quarrelled with the unfortunate young man, and forced me to forbid him the house."

"What a story-telling goose you are!" cried Georgia.

"Oh, relieve your conscience by calling me bad names, if you choose. I am a patient creature, and can bear a great deal," said Phillis. "Sooner or later the consequences of your ill-treatment will prove fatal; but go on, young woman, go on."

She sank into a chair, and presented an image of such woe-begone wretchedness, that grandma and Georgia laughed heartily, as even much graver persons would have been forced to do.

"Poor old Ferguson, or some other of his

workmen must be ill," grandma observed, as soon as she had recovered her gravity. "If that is the case, you may be sure Denis is doing the man's duty in the day-time, and taking care of him at night—a kinder-hearted creature never lived; he never thinks of personal trouble, if there is anything he can do for those about him."

"Which proves him a very weak-minded young person. He would not at all answer for the hero of one of those fashionable novels you and G. G. are so fond of reading," rejoined Phillis.

"We have a work of that description to finish at present," said Georgia; "so you may either sit quiet or go about your own affairs."

"I prefer the latter alternative," replied Phillis; "or, if I don't, I must accept it. You two idle people delude me into wasting a great deal of time."

"I wish we could," said her grandmother; "or at least induce you to sit still occasionally."

"These are the temptings of Satan!" cried Phillis French.

"Just wait and hear the next chapter," pleaded Georgia, taking a book off the table. "There is the nicest description of a woman, bearing up nobly under terrible suspense, that I have read for an age."

"I hate such descriptions! I believe it is wicked to write them!" exclaimed Phillis, with one of the outbursts of violence wherewith she sometimes astounded Georgia. Then she began to laugh; her face cleared as suddenly as it had

clouded over, and she added gaily,—"Besides, I read the chapter last night after you were both asleep, into the bargain. Old Elder Stowe is coming to buy two of my pigs, and I must be in a practical frame of mind, else I sha'n't cheat him as much as I ought, and shall have regrets afterwards. Farewell, my children! This is the Duchess of Cotor receiving her guests."

She caught up a shawl which lay on a chair, draped it about her in a train, and stood a caricature of a fine-lady affectation and insolent pride. In another moment the shawl was folded tight across her shoulders, her hair pushed back, her forehead puckered into scores of wrinkles, until she became an image of severity and petty care.

"The New England spinster preparing to drive a hard bargain," she announced, though the excellence of the acting rendered the explanation unnecessary. "Polly, the milkmaid!" she called out, and there stood an awkward, puffy-cheeked country lass, grinning and dropping curtseys. "Horoo!" she cried, and dashed into an Irish jig. "Show is over!" was the next exclamation, then she disappeared.

Grandma had been laughing, but as the door closed, Georgia saw her shake her head—caught a deep sigh too.

"She is the cleverest gipsy alive!" cried Miss Grosvenor.

"I hope she is a happy one," returned the old lady.

"And do you fear she is not?" asked Georgia.

"I don't know," replied grandma sadly. Miss Grosvenor longed to put further questions, but while meditating whether she might venture to do so, Mrs Davis looked up, and said in her usual cheerful voice,—"My dear, shall we go on with our chapter?"

Georgia opened the book, and began to read, but interesting as the story was, her thoughts wandered somewhat. She could not avoid the reflection that Phillis French and her grandmother were the most reticent women she had ever known, and in spite of their frank good-nature and simplicity, the least accessible to question upon any matter personal to themselves.

That evening, after tea, the two girls walked to the lake, and while they were resting on a fallen tree-trunk, old Patrick appeared along the winding path which skirted the water, and led over the hill to the Den.

When he drew near the ladies, he stopped and took off his hat; his long white hair fluttered in the breeze, and he looked a very picturesque object as he stood leaning on his staff.

"Good evening, Patrick," they called at the same instant.

"The hoighth of the finest to ye both, and sure, the best wadn't be as good as ye desarve," returned Patrick. "'Av I was at home in the ould counthry, it's two quanes of fairies I'd have taken yez for, inthirely!"

"We are too thorough Republicans to accept queenship even in fairyland, Patrick," said Phillis French.

"Troth, Miss Phaylis, av ye'll excuse the liberty, ye can't help quaning it over the young gintlemen's harrits," replied the old man readily.

"And talking of young gentlemen, what has become of Mr Bourke?" asked Phillis.

"Ah, now, Miss Phaylis, dear, his not razionable, isn't Misther Dinis, and that's the thruth!" Patrick exclaimed, in accents as reproachful as if laying his young master's faults at the door of the person he addressed.

"You would be furious, Patrick, if anybody else said that?"

"Faith, why wudn't I? Many's the time I've dandled him on my knees when he warn't the hoighth of a blade o' corn—all the more razon, av coorse, why I'd not hear him spoke agin! But av ye'd say a word yoursilf, Miss Phaylis, or pershuade her leddyship here to shpake, it might have more effect than comin' from mesel' that his heerd talk iver since he can remimber, and afore it, on the top of that."

'But what dreadful thing is he doing, Patrick? Don't be so mysterious; you quite frighten me."

"Mysterious, is it? Faix, no! He's just wearin' his hairt out a-watchin' wid ould Ferguson the night, and an extra hand wanted in the fields, and not wan to be got for love or money, and him taking the place, and payin'

Ferguson his wage all the same as av he was there himsel', instead of lyin' in his bed groanin' with rheumatiz, which he richly deserves, for he laughed in my face when I tould him of a remedy that come down to me from my grandmother, rest her soul, that's been dead since I was in the cradle."

Patrick paused to breathe and wipe his head with a light yellow handkerchief, and Phillis French took this opportunity to whisper in Georgia's ear,—

"I said this morning that poor Denis wouldn't answer for the hero of a fashionable novel. I'm afraid, in spite of the castle, we can't even call him a gentleman. Whoever knew of a gentleman taking care of a sick man at night, and working all day in the place of one of his own labourers. He really must have been born in the attics or in the roof—certainly not anywhere near the state apartments."

"Don't you think you are rather silly?" asked Georgia in a tone as dispassionate as if proposing some question of a nature so purely abstract, that neither her listener nor herself could have any personal interest therein.

"Oh dear, no—nor do you, for that matter!" Phillis French replied, with one of her baby chuckles, then turned to the old man again. "So poor Ferguson is very ill?"

"It's the pain that's desthryin' him," Patrick explained; "what he call rheumatiz fayver, but he'll be gettin' betther soon."

"If not, Mr Bourke must be relieved from sitting up at night?" said Phillis.

"It's like yerself to think o' that, Miss Phaylis!" returned Patrick admiringly.

"Ferguson's wife is a wakely craythur, and he needs a power o' rubbin'—his very onraysinable, is Ferguson."

"You can't expect him to be very reasonable when he has rheumatic fever," said Phillis laughing,—

"Mibby not," Patrick admitted, but with slight cordiality. It was plain that he found it difficult to forgive Ferguson for causing Mr Bourke so much trouble.

The next day was Sunday, and in the evening Bourke appeared at the Nest, looking more sunburned than usual, and somewhat tired, but in excellent spirits, and submitting with perfect good-humour to Phillis French's unmerciful raillery upon what she termed his efforts to enact Don Quixote deprived of any portion of romance, even of any romantic sentiments on his own part.

Georgia could not help feeling that Phillis's remarks were meant rather to satirise her strictures upon the young man's ability to content himself with the existence he led, rather than to express condemnation of his pursuits and theories. But she wisely decided to enter into no explanations with her friend, for her own ideas, presented in this changed dress, looked so pretty and circumscribed that, for the time, she felt ashamed of them.

All the same, she did not propose to be convinced, either by Bourke's argument or any ridiculous turn which Phillis might give to her class prejudices. The life Bourke had adopted was unfitting a man whose birth and education qualified him for a very different career, and she assured herself that judgment upon him could not assume too severe a form. He must certainly be utterly destitute of ambition, and the lack was more unpardonable than would have been an excess equal to that which influenced Macbeth.

But in spite of her determination to look down upon Denis Bourke, the days which succeeded passed very pleasantly, and his efforts had so much to do therewith, that she found it difficult to keep her resolve as active as she intended.

Apparently it had been possible to supply the sick labourer's place, as Mr Bourke found a good deal of leisure, which he devoted to the service or amusement of the ladies at the Nest, though he did not do this until he had quietly forced Miss Grosvenor to show that, so far from resenting or being bored by his visits, she was quite ready to accept her share of his society, and to like it.

Phillis made it evident that she wished to give Georgia every opportunity for becoming really well acquainted with their neighbour, and Miss Grosvenor asked herself if this was because the girl had an attachment for him, and wanted

her to reach a stand-point where her verdict would be favourable.

Of course Georgia had been obliged to relinquish her first idea, that such an attachment on her friend's part must reduce her future to a very muddy level indeed; this could only endure while persisting in the idea that the man was low-born and imperfectly educated; but she held fast to her theory, that for Phillis's whole life to pass in this retired place, and in the midst of her present occupations, would be a sacrifice of the brilliant creature too dreadful to contemplate.

Georgia decided that her duty in the case was plain; to open Phillis's eyes to a proper appreciation of her own talents, and a conception of the future, which her varied gifts and charms would entitle her to expect, and, at the same time, to rouse in her a desire to attain such elevation. As the natural sequence of this view came a second thought—where was the prince or hero to come from, who should take Phillis by the hand, and lead her forward and upward? As yet Denis Bourke was the only approach to such a personage visible upon the horizon; indeed, he was not even that, only a substitute, and a very unsatisfactory one, since he seemed to have no idea even of trying to raise his own existence higher in the social scale.

So it was plain also to Georgia that her duty extended to the point of constituting herself an apostle, or, so to speak, the Egeria (of course with no feminine weakness) for this misguided

young man, to plant in him the seeds of dormant ambition, waken discontent with his present aims, or lack of them, and make him eager to lift himself out of obscurity.

All the same, as the days went on, Georgia had to admit (much against her will) that nothing could be less prosaic and commonplace than this obscure existence as Phillis and Bourke lived it, to watch which was more like dreaming over a bucolic idyl than anything else ; and she found it very pleasant, and restful also, to accept her actual share in the life.

But this could only last for a time, and so it ought to be with them—must be, Georgia declared resolutely. Bourke must achieve fortune and position. Phillis must have her rightful place in the world. Miss Grosvenor entirely forgot her ordinary opinions — by no means original or uncommon—of the emptiness and hollowness of that world—the unsatisfactory results which ambition brought. Phillis must be taught to plume her wings, and Denis Bourke roused out of his lethargy—yes, her duty was plain.

But the weather was warm, the rest and peace of the enchanted spot so infectious, that Georgia did not prove as energetic as she had intended, and enjoyed her pastoral as much as if she had really been a shepherdess—but a shepherdess in a Watteau form, and no necessity for running after the sheep.

CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGIA GROSVENOR was a very astonished young woman when she woke up to the fact, that she had been two months in the retreat which she had termed her Happy Valley. Nothing save an enumeration of dates would convince her of the truth of this statement, presented in a letter lately received from Aunt Conyngham. But dates are as stubborn as if they were human beings, and the pains she took to prove her relative in error, only showed the correctness of the calculation. Georgia had left town before the middle of May, and it was now a fortnight since beautiful June came to an end.

At least she had gained wonderfully in health; the face that looked at her out of her mirror was no longer weary and pale. A slight tint of sunburn freshened it; faint roses blossomed in her cheeks; she could walk several miles without fatigue, and, best of all, her spirits shared in the change, and were pervaded by a sense of peace and repose such as she had never known.

The world seemed to drift further and further off. It might have disappeared from sight altogether, had it not been for Aunt Conyngham's frequent epistles, and those still pleasanter letters, signed with Herbert Caruthers's name.

These latter messages did occasionally remind Georgia that even yet she had not begun the work of contemplation and debate which must be performed, but there was time enough. She had no intention of deserting her retreat until autumn. Useless for Aunt Conyngham to try and inveigle her into the dissipation of Newport. Her first duty was to get entirely well and strong, and she could only do so by remaining where she could have the beneficial effects of bracing mountain air.

She said and wrote this with a virtuous resolution which must have made any person smile, who knew how careless she had always been of any such consideration; but Aunt Conyngham bore the announcement with tolerable patience, for wise Mr Caruthers had hinted that this prolonged seclusion might prove the most favourable aid possible to their mutual wishes.

Life and the world—as he and his coadjutor comprehended the terms—would look all the brighter to the young lady, after her long months of monotonous existence. Into the bargain, she was beyond the reach of any perilous agencies, such as handsome, eligible, youthful gallants, and showy matrimonial pro-

positions, which might militate against the reasonable and right decision to which both hoped to bring her.

As for Georgia, when she roused herself sufficiently to realise the fulness of her contentment, she was too thoroughly satisfied even to wonder much thereat. Her regard for Phillis French had grown into the warmest affection she had ever felt towards any woman of her own age. Phillis's companionship was a constant delight, and she could not believe that any separating point must sooner or later arrive in their paths which had been so abruptly brought together. Where Georgia's prejudices against Denis Bourke had gone, she could no more have told than she could account for the rapid flight of the past weeks. She had learned thoroughly to appreciate him ; to do full justice to his talents, and find great pleasure in his society, though her very admiration of his mental gifts increased always her dissatisfaction with his life and pursuits.

He had long since grown as much at ease in her presence, as he was in that of Phillis French herself ; he laughed and jested, and revealed a fund of racy Irish humour, somewhat out of keeping with his rather grave exterior. But whenever they were alone, Miss Grosvenor and he speedily got on to serious subjects. She was never tired of combating what she termed his impossible opinions, and he never at the end of his arguments.

She had visited his farm, time and again, his coal-mine, his "store," and was forced to admit that, so far, the co-operative system on which he conducted matters between himself and his workmen seemed very successful; as far removed from the vague dreams of a Romney Leigh, as they were from the various socialistic associations who have especially chosen America for the field of their failures, in trying to combine incompatible theories into a sound whole capable of practical development. All the same, she persisted in considering this course a waste of his powers. A man ought to possess personal ambitions; to go forth into the great arena, and struggle for position, for fame. Thereotically, the idea of a general brotherhood might be wondrous beautiful, but the world was not ready for it by many centuries. So slight an effort on the part of one man to reduce such doctrines to practice, as valueless as attempting to drain the ocean by means of a pint cup.

Nevertheless, his glowing exposition—and he could be very eloquent when excited—gained a strong influence over her imagination and sympathies. Not that she yielded an inch in her strictures against the narrowness and unworthiness of his existence compared with what his talents demanded of him; but the breadth of his views, the nobility of his conceptions, ay, the sacrifices he made, caused that career out in the eyes of men, that race for worldly prizes, that

strife for worldly crowns, to appear less meritorious and grand.

She was too susceptible not to be deeply affected by the lives he and Phillis French led, whether regarded as the natural result of their characters, or the outgrowth of their strange theories. She saw that neither occupation, nor care for those about, nor readiness to aid even by the work of their hands all poor and needy, impeded their mental progress. There was a constant reaching upwards, an intellectual vitality, just as keen as if they had lived as innocent of bodily toil as a German professor, or a famous poetess.

But Georgia, anxious to defer serious thought upon any subject—telling herself she must allow nothing to disturb the quiet which had done her such good—meditated little upon this influence, and the radical change in many of her views acquired a deeper hold, because it came so gradually as to be insensible.

Late one afternoon the two girls were seated under the maple-trees on the lawn, in lazy enjoyment of the freshness after the noon-day heat, when Denis Bourke appeared, bearing a package of newspapers and letters.

"I found these for you at the post-office," he said, depositing his burden on a chair which stood between them, and resting himself upon a bench opposite. He began to employ his straw hat as a fan, while he watched the pair divide the spoils, too busy for a few instants to bestow

any attention upon him after their hastily uttered thanks; but he seemed very well satisfied to sit there in idle serenity and regard the pretty picture they made.

"Five letters, and all that printed rubbish for you, G. G.!" cried Phillis. "It is not fair, Denis Bourke, only one beggarly epistle as my portion. At all events, here is my *Farmer's Journal*, so I am provided with sensible reading matter for the rest of the day."

Bourke laughed scornful unbelief of her sincerity.

"If you are impertinent, I'll make you read the whole paper aloud, even to the advertisements," she said threateningly; then turned to Georgia, and added, "please don't sit there such an image of polite impatience, fumbling your letters. Open them, and be done with it. If they are all marriage proposals, you can recommend me for those you decline."

"I fancy they are innocent of such exciting news," replied Georgia. "This is from my aunt; I'm sure it contains a lecture."

"You might let Miss Phillis inherit that instead of the marriage offer," suggested Bourke.

"Far be it from P. French to deprive a friend of anything so useful and necessary," cried Phillis. "Go on, G. G. The next."

"From Amy Moreland. I've told you about her. There will be at least eight pages full of her engagement—"

"And her lover's perfections," interrupted

Phillis. "Pass! it is too warm for such heroics. If the others are likely to be no more interesting, you may put them in your pocket."

"I think they would not be," said Georgia; but after looking again at the envelopes she observed,—"Oh, this is from my brother! Excuse me; I will just see what he says; I have been expecting a letter for some time."

"Don't allow us to interfere with your sisterly affection," laughed Phillis. "Probably he is in a scrape; women's brothers always are."

Georgia opened the epistle, glanced down the page, and exclaimed joyfully,

"Why, he is coming home for a few months!"

"I condole with you," said Phillis. "It must be an awful thing to have a brother! The least he can do to show his regret for existing, is to keep out of the way."

"Do you agree with that heretical sentiment, Mr Bourke?" asked Georgia.

"I never thought about it," he answered; "but I should say that a brother would be a superfluous luxury."

"When is yours coming?" demanded Phillis.

Georgia read on for a moment, and then replied,—

"In a few days. He was to sail almost immediately."

"Oh! he will want you to go away," Phillis exclaimed, in tones of dismay.

"No; he has received the letter I wrote him from here; says he will visit Aunt Conyngham

at Newport for a week, and then join me." This suggested a new thought, and she asked, in perplexity, "but what shall I do with him, P. French? You can't take him in?"

"I hope I am capable of taking in any son of Adam that ever existed," returned she; "but in the sense you mean, I can't help. There is no room in the Nest for a male bird."

"And no hotel or possible lodging nearer than Wachuset," said Georgia. "Three miles to come and go each time he visits me."

"He could live on gingerbread at the railroad station, and sleep in a baggage car," said P. French, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if uttering a perfectly reasonable and satisfactory proposition.

Georgia and Bourke laughed, and the latter observed,

"I never happened to hear you mention your brother, Miss Grosvenor."

"She thought the subject would be more interesting to me," said Phillis. "But what will you do with him, G. G.? There's an empty crow's nest in the old poplar; but perhaps it wouldn't be big enough to hold his lordship."

"My half-brother, Mr Bourke," Georgia explained.

"And he exults in such a pretty name, Maurice Peyton," cried Phillis. "Why didn't you come into the world with a fine-sounding appellation, Denis Bourke?"

"Maurice Peyton," he repeated.

A wasp just then settled on a knot of flowers

Georgia wore at her throat, and she and Phillis French were so busy inducing the insect to depart without rousing its anger, that they did not observe the tone of astonishment in which Bourke uttered the name. His surprise was evidently a pleasant one; for his eyes lighted up, and he smiled to himself while he rose to drive away the wasp, which insisted on circling about Georgia's head in a threatening fashion.

"I have an idea," Bourke said suddenly, after the ill-tempered little yellow-jacket had been convinced that his wisest plan was to go in search of enemies less able to defend themselves. "I have a capital idea!"

Phillis French expressed unbounded wonder, by face and gesture, then seized a newspaper, and began to fan Denis, with a comical affectation of fear and pity, which made him and Georgia laugh anew.

"Sit down young man; sit down," she cried pleadingly.

"And your capital idea, Mr Bourke?" demanded Miss Grosvenor.

"Why shouldn't your brother stop with me? There is plenty of room up at the Den, and Tabitha and Patrick will make him tolerably comfortable."

Phillis French sank back in her seat with a long-drawn sigh of relief, and closed her eyes, as if weak and faint from the effects of her terrified sympathy.

"You have escaped unharmed this time, Denis

Bourke, but don't run such risks often," she said solemnly.

"It is very, very kind of you, Mr Bourke," Georgia said, as soon as Phillis's nonsense would let her speak intelligibly. "But are you sure it would not be a trouble?"

"The matter requires no discussion," interrupted Phillis. "Nothing short of an interposition of destiny could have roused Denis Bourke to that inspired pitch. G. G., your relative is disposed of; let your mind be at rest."

"Please consider the thing settled," said Bourke. "I shall like immensely to have a visitor, and I promise that your brother shall have no cause to complain."

"Then he will be unhappy," put in Phillis; "a man without something to grumble about always is."

"I am sure he will find it all charming," said Georgia. "But we must—that is—"

She hesitated; she wanted to explain that pecuniary remuneration must be mentioned; it seemed difficult to do so. At the same time, she was thinking how completely her opinions in regard to Denis Bourke had changed since she found such explanation difficult.

He relieved her slight embarrassment (which Phillis French was silently and highly enjoying, as Georgia might have perceived, had she looked towards the mischievous young woman) by saying,—

"If you will give me an address in New York,

for your brother, Miss Grosvenor, I'll just write to him myself."

"I can't bear any more!" cried Phillis French, in a dazed, awe-stricken tone. "Denis Bourke positively offering to write a letter!"

"I am only going to write the address at present," replied Bourke, taking a little note-book and pencil out of his pocket. He wrote down the name of the banker to whom Georgia said her brother would be sure to go the day of his arrival. They sat and talked merry nonsense for a while; then Phillis sent Bourke into the house to persuade grandma to join them, which the old lady consented to do, feeling very brisk and talkative after her nap.

She was informed of the news Georgia had received, and beamed with congratulations, which Phillis interspersed with slighting remarks upon men in general, and brothers in particular.

The conversation was interrupted by the loud banging of the gate.

"There comes the boy from the telegraph office!" cried Phillis. "Oh, Georgia, I am sure your aunt has ordered you home! I detest that woman instinctively — aunts are worse than brothers!" she hurried forward to meet the approaching Mercury—a lean sandy-haired lad of fifteen, much too large for his clothes, and seeming to possess more knees and elbows than by right belonged to him, with an expression of mingled intelligence and love of fun in his countenance which redeemed the plain features.

"Perhaps if you had tried, you might have taken that gate off its hinges, Joe Grimshaw," she said, pretending to frown.

"Jest as easy as winkin'," Miss Phillis, returned the youth, with a grin. "But I kinder thought I'd leave it on, else there wouldn't be nothin' to bang another time; and I am a Government officer, I am, and like to denounce my 'rival."

"Did you come hoping to steal my harvest apples, Joe Grimshaw?" demanded Phillis, who delighted in the young rascal's readiness.

"Not steal!" he replied energetically. "I'm a reformed *character*, Miss French, through and through! I'm thinkin' of goin' to Sunday school, ef you'll take a class. You see there ain't a tree about that's got a n'apple on it this year; and a fellar's got to find okypation on the Sabba'-day."

"What have you brought, you bad Joe, you?"

"One o' them yaller things."

"Well, give it to me."

"It's for the city gal—but they h'ain't spelt her name right. I heerd you call her Miss Grovner, and it's writ Gros-ve-nor."

"Did you never hear of a name been written one way and pronounced another, Joe?"

"No! It ain't accordin' to natur'. If any fellar did it by me, I'd larnin' him!" Joe asserted stoutly.

By this time they had reached the trio, and the lad began opening the little satchel which he

carried slung over his shoulder, an operation unduly lengthened by his eyes being fixed on Georgia.

"This is the worst boy in the neighbourhood, Miss Grosvenor," said Phillis, by way of introduction.

Joe grinned in modest appreciation of the compliment, then shook his head, and observed in a melancholy tone,—

"I was; but Tite Peabody's come back from gittin' turned out of his uncle's, and I aint a patchin' to him."

"How are you anyway, Joe?" asked Denis.

"Oh, just anyway I can! How do you fix it yourself these days, Mr Bourke? I wish you'd tell Jim Sober I'm a comin' to see him, ef these plaguey telegrums ever give me a chance—I'm that drove I don't know half the time whether I'm myself or a yoke o' oxen. Here's *your* ticket, Miss Gros-ve-nor," he continued, giving her name the benefit of its full number of syllables. But in spite of his easy assurance of manner and talk, he was so evidently free from any intention of showing disrespect, that one could not take offence.

"Joe, how is your aunt?" asked grandma.

"She's a bobbin' about, I thank you, ma'am! Porty cantankerous these days, she thinks it's religion, but it ain't—it's gooseberries. She's allays took so in July, mother says—but there ain't no end to mother's patience, you know, Miss Davis!"

Georgia opened her despatch, read it, and exclaimed,—

"That provoking brother of mine! He did not sail when he intended. He waits for his letter to reach me, and then remembers to telegraph."

"I gave you my opinion of brothers a little while ago," observed Phillis; "here is a proof how correct I was. When does he sail?"

"Oh, he will not be here till August," Georgia answered, in a tone of such disappointment that Phillis began to console her, and grandma said,—

"The weeks go so fast, my dear, don't be unhappy."

"I couldn't be here, grandma," Miss Grosvenor replied. Then she noticed that Joe was preparing to take his departure, and whispered to Phillis, "I have no money, lend me fifty cents to give the boy."

"You had better not. He will be offended."

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, very well, by your experience of your own countrymen, my travelled friend," laughed Phillis. "Wait a moment, Joe," she continued aloud, then ran into the house, and presently came back with some money which she slipped into Georgia's hand.

The boy meanwhile had been answering grandma's questions as to matters in his home, where a sister of Joe's father, afflicted with bad health and a worse temper, rendered life a

burden to his widow. When the conversation ended, Miss Grosvenor offered the lad her gift.

"The telegrum was paid," said he.

"Yes, I know—but this is for you."

The boy grew scarlet to the roots of his hair—treated her to a glance as fiery as if she had struck him—and said slowly,—

"I'm obliged to you, ma'am! The company pays me, and I 'arn what I git. We hain't never had no beggars among us Grimshaws, leastways not as ever I heerd, and I shouldn't want to begin the trade."

"I beg your pardon!" cried Georgia, fairly embarrassed, and conscious that both Phillis and Bourke were enjoying her surprised discomfiture.

"Not a beg!" returned Joe, brightened at once. "I axpect you and mis both on the square! I heerd Miss Jumper, she keeps store down to the corners, say you'd lived a'most allays in furrin' parts—I calculate you hain't got used to our ways. It's all right, ma'am—I was sort o' riled, but it was only for a minnit."

Georgia laughed, and sat down on a bench at a little distance to disappoint herself anew by a second persual of her despatch, after the foolish habit common to mortals when they receive unwelcome tidings. Grandma and Phillis followed to utter comforting assurances, and Joe Grimshaw took the opportunity to favour Mr Bourke with his opinion in regard to the two young ladies.

"She's a picturful creetur', that Miss Grosve-nor," he said; "but then, Miss Phillis, she's

jest as harnsome in her way. I'll be snaked ef I can tell which on 'em porties it the most."

"You make up your mind, Joe, and tell me," said Bourke.

"I will," replied Joe, with perfect gravity. "I'm off now; that was the last of the telegrums, and I've got a chose of my own on hand."

"What have you got to do?"

"You know Bill Winston? Wal I'm goin' to give him Hail Columbia! I promised him I would last Sunday when he pinched me in meetin', and he'll find I mean to keep my word. Ef he can see to wink out of his glass eye tomorrow, you may call me a Dutchman."

Joe departed, whistling an air from The Grand Duchess, rendered familiar by peripatetic hand organs, evidently in a state of high satisfaction with himself and his anticipated evening's occupation.

Bourke was still laughing when he joined the ladies, and made them laugh too by a recital of Joe's perplexity between their respective charms, and his sense of virtue and righteous retribution in the chastisement he proposed to bestow upon his enemy.

"Do you mean to tell me there are many boys who would feel as he did about being offered money?" Georgia asked.

"Indeed I do," replied Phillis. "Ask Denis Bourke if he hadn't numerous lessons to learn after he came to live in this wilderness."

"I begin to think I have too," said Georgia,

and mentally added that her discoveries came from more quarters than one.

Miss Grosvenor talked a great deal to grandma about her brother, and Phillis often playfully declared that she was certain her relative nourished a secret romantic passion for this unknown personage, whom the girl had christened "The Troubadour," on account of his handsome face, as portrayed in the photograph which Miss Grosvenor had displayed. But Phillis audaciously asserted that she preferred downright ugliness in a man, and was sure in advance that if ever she met the original of the picture, she should hate him just by reason of that beauty; though she admitted that the melancholy eyes and the sensitive mouth, which would have been fairly feminine in its sweetness, but for the intense pride revealed there also, ought to have belonged to a poet or painter, "or some other preposterous, impossible creature," as she usually wound up her commendation.

To-night, after Denis Bourke had departed, and the three ladies were seated over the tea-table, grandma began again making a great many inquiries in regard to Maurice Peyton, in a friendly, interested fashion, which Georgia liked. Phillis listened almost in silence to the conversation; and Georgia was struck anew by a peculiarity of the odd young woman which she had often noticed. Though a great talker,—by fits and starts, however,—Phillis was the least given to asking questions or granting personal

information of anybody Miss Grosvenor had ever met.

"You would be an admirable companion for a person who had a secret to keep, P. French," she said later, as the two were strolling up and down the lawn in the twilight, while grandma kept watch in the verandah.

"I am, and should be, admirable under any and all circumstances," Phillis replied. "But whence this sudden outburst of appreciation, G. G.?"

"And if you had a secret to keep, the tortures of the inquisition would not wring it from you," pursued Georgia.

"Do it more!" cried Phillis. "I can bear a huge amount of praise. My dear, if it should ever be thought necessary to give my memoirs to an admiring world, you shall have the honour of writing them."

"But even a virtue can be exaggerated," added Georgia.

"I seem to have heard or read something of that sort—I rather think in an old copy-book," said Phillis. "Content yourself with praising me; there you show positive originality."

"For three entire weeks you let me make ridiculous blunders in regard to Mr Bourke, and never opened your lips. I merely cite this as an instance of going too far in your virtuous habit—not because it was of any real consequence, you understand."

"Oh, I understand perfectly."

"But I want you to see your error."

"I don't, though. It was a pleasure to you to build up a theory, and judge him thereby; why should I deprive you of the satisfaction?"

"And now you do not even show a natural human curiosity in regard to my Maurice," continued Georgia, recommencing her attack from a new point.

"It is not worth while, since he is coming here. It's like rubbing the bloom off a plum to find out all about a person in advance."

"Women have spoiled him a great deal, but he is very nice in many ways—only such a dreadful flirt!"

"Was that said to caution me?" asked P. French calmly.

"Do you mean to accuse me of impertinence?" retorted Georgia, feeling vaguely conscience-stricken, and taking refuge in pretended indignation.

"Don't answer my question by another. Was it? You know you might just as well reply at once, and tell the truth; you will have to."

Miss Grosvenor was so thoroughly acquainted with her friend's persistency that she knew to procrastinate would be useless; certain, too, that Phillis had already read her thought as clearly as if she expressed it, by that strange, clairvoyant-like power she possessed.

"Upon my word, I believe I must say yes!" cried Georgia, somewhat dismayed. "Are you vexed, Phil?"

"Not in the least."

"But then, all men are flirts—"

"They are not. Denis Bourke isn't, for one."

"You are very confident. Does he like you?"

"Flirt with him and find out."

"I feel half inclined. You wouldn't be angry?"

"Why, if he belonged to me, and you could turn his head, I'd say a good riddance."

Just then grandma called Miss Grosvenor to come and look at a wonderful moth which had settled on a vine at the further end of the porch, and Georgia went away.

Left to herself, P. French began to laugh softly.

"Oh, G. G.!" she said half aloud, and nodded her head several times with a satisfied air.

CHAPTER IX.

THE days flew on so fast that Miss Grosvenor tried to account, vainly as ever, for the flight of time. She was playfully derided by P. French for trying, and grandma said, in her sweet, gentle way,—

"Whenever it has gone you can be thankful, my dear. You say you are happy, and certainly you are on the high road to health."

"I should think so," returned Georgia. "My grandma, I can sleep eight hours at a stretch, and as for my appetite—"

"Don't rouse unpleasant reflections in my mind, G. G.," broke in Phillis. "I detest personalities, and I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world; but, if I can count, I've twenty-seven chickens less than I had when you arrived. As for eggs, unless I find some hens like that celebrated fowl of old Guinness's, that laid two a day, I shall have to give up all hope of having any to send to market."

"That proves you haven't given me anything else to eat. I'd be ashamed to be so stingy."

"Cinders!" Phillis French called to that handmaid, who chanced to pass the open door at the moment,

"Yes'm!" said Cinders, beginning to giggle.

"Tell Ninny to make a strawberry shortcake for tea, richer than usual, and skim a quart of cream," ordered Phillis. "I'll have my revenge, Miss Georgia. You will eat yourself into such an indigestion, that you'll have to live on calcined magnesia for three days to come."

"If I know myself," said Georgia, "I am able to suffer resignedly in a good cause, Miss French."

"As Denis Bourke offended me yesterday," continued Phillis, "I shall send for him, so that he may share your indigestion."

This sending for Bourke, or his appearing when not sent for, had long grown such daily occurrences, that Miss Grosvenor received the proposal quite as a matter of course. As acquaintance with Bourke had gradually dispelled her first idea that any liking for the man on Phillis's part would be a thing to regret; oddly enough the probability of such liking ceased to haunt Georgia, and she put by reflection on the subject in a fashion as unaccountable as the manner in which she deferred any contemplation or decision concerning her own future.

The gentleman opened the garden gate just after the mention of his name, and was cordially received by the three ladies.

"For once," said Phillis, "this exile of Erin

has come when he was wanted. He shall be rewarded by an invitation to partake of our humble fare; but he must promise not to devour six hot biscuits, as he did the last time we honoured him with a seat at our vestal board."

"I meant to stop whether you asked me or not," Denis replied, with composed assurance. "But the biscuit business is an awful slander; I never touch such indigestible abominations."

"If I have any impertinence, you'll get your national diet—potatoes and butter-milk," vowed Phillis.

But Mr Bourke was fated to wait a good while for his supper, and eat it in the solitude of his own dwelling. At this moment a horse and waggon, which he recognised as his property, halted at the gate.

"Why, there is Patrick!" he exclaimed. "What's amiss, I wonder!"

He and Phillis hurried down the path; and Patrick having caught sight of them, could be heard calling,—

"Oh, Misther Dinis, it's sarchin' yez, I am!"

"Something must be the matter," grandma said to Miss Grosvenor; "for Patrick never drives if he can help it."

Georgia gave the old lady her arm, and they followed the other two, which, however, proved unnecessary, so far as hearing what was said went, for the voices rang out clearly enough in the stillness to render every word audible.

Phillis and Bourke were descending simultaneously.

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

"Oh, Misther Denis, Misther Denis!" repeated Patrick.

"Confound you!" cried Bourke. "Can't you say what's up?"

"It's down ye mane, I'm thinking!" retorted the old man; "and don't take this opportunity to lose yer temper, Dinis darlin'—for we'll have enough to do to occupy all our facoolties."

"Oh, Patrick, don't be aggravating!" exclaimed Phillis French.

"Is that yersilf, Miss Phaylis? The hoight of welcome to ye, and be the same token to the grandmother, and the town lady comin' down the path unknownst."

"Is the house on fire?" asked Denis.

"Why would ye think it?" returned Patrick. "Ain't I tellin' ye over and over it's the docthor we want, and at once, for Tabitha?"

"Has she hurt herself?"

"Why would she? Only givin' wan screech from froight, as a faymale might, ye know—savin' your prisence, Miss Phaylis—but barrin' that, she behaved as well as possible. We were just looking at the spotted cow—"

"Oh, is the spotted cow sick?" Phillis asked.

"She's a mother since the mornin', miss, but doing well, and the calf a lively thing. It was climbin' the fince when he heard us, to hide

that he was there, instid of mindin' his dooties; that was the cause of the misfortin'."

To keep from laughing was out of the question, and Denis knew that any betrayal of impatience would only further lengthen the old man's account.

"Who climbed the fence?" he asked.

"Ah, that's what he didn't do, for he fell backward, and that's how he doubled his leg under him," returned Patrick. "But byes will be byes, so we mustn't be haird on him; though, for my own part, I tell ye frankly I'll never belave Jemmy Sober 'll grow up worth his salt."

"So Jemmy has broken his leg?"

"He'd have done it as sure as powers, av it hadn't been he bruk his arrum," said Patrick. "So the harness bein' on the old horse, I pit him in the cart, and drove down here to give ye warnin'."

"But we must have the doctor, Patrick."

"We must, av ye insist," replied Patrick, in a discontented tone; "but Masther Denis, ye minded the dog's leg so illigantly, that av he hadn't died, he'd have been trottin' about as free as ever so av yez thry yer hand on the bye, it wad be a savin' for the mother."

"And Jem Sober would go in search of the dog," observed Phillis. "Away with with you, Denis! You will just catch the doctor at the station; he had to go to Moulton, and was coming back by this evening's train; it will be in by the time you get down the hill."

Bourke uttered hasty adieus to the three ladies, and jumped into the waggon.

"But you will come back to tea; we can very well wait awhile," said grandma.

"Thanks; no. I shall go home the other road, and I must stop with poor little Jem this evening."

He drove off, but even amid the clatter of the wheels Patrick was heard to remark,—

"Sure ye might have consinted, Misther Denis; av the ladies wanted ye for aeting, it's a pity not to give them their way—though that's not to make a rule of, ye mind, for av ye give in too much to faymales—"

The rest of the sentence was lost to the listeners, but as Phillis observed in the midst of her laughter, it was not difficult to divine what it must have been.

Grandma had to bestow a great deal of commiseration upon poor little Jem Sober and his mother, then they went in to tea.

While they were at table, Mr Sykes was reported to be in the kitchen, waiting to hold an interview with Miss French, and as Phillis said that she should be busy for at least an hour examining accounts, Georgia set forth on a solitary walk.

When she got home again, she discovered that Phillis had finished her business with the overseer, and gone on an errand to the house of Ann Raines, an elderly virgin of the neighbourhood who did needlework for her, and was always

ready to be called upon when circumstances demanded an extra hand in Phillis French's kitchen or laundry.

Miss Grosvenor went in search of grandma, whom she found in her room, seated at an *escritoire*, busy among neatly-arranged packages of papers.

"Come in, my dear," she said, as Georgia expressed a fear that she had disturbed her. "I was looking for a recipe I wanted, and got to turning over old letters—reading them, too, before I knew what I was about—always a foolish thing for a person of my age to do."

"That is Phillis's hand," Miss Grosvenor remarked, glancing at the superscription on an envelope into which grandma was putting the epistle she had been reading when interrupted by Georgia's entrance. "There is no mistaking her peculiar chirography.

"Yes, these are all from her," grandma replied, pointing to a large pile.

Intimate as they had grown, Phillis's past still remained a sealed book to her friend, which the girl showed no inclination to open.

"I did not know she had ever been away from you long enough to afford time for such a voluminous correspondence," Georgia said, in surprise.

"We were together when she was a little child, but after that I never saw her till five years ago," said grandma. "Hasn't she told you anything about herself?"

"Not a word! She is the most secretive girl I ever met."

"Ah, well, I can understand that it is painful to look back," sighed the old lady. "But I'll tell you, because you will only like the better—and you do like her."

"I love her dearly!"

"I am so glad! My dear, I can give you no idea what a happiness your coming here has proved to both of us."

"I know it is just the pleasantest thing that ever happened to me," replied Georgia, kissing grandma's forehead. "Now, do tell me about Phil, and where she got all her accomplishments and her practical knowledge. Why, she is like three people rolled into one, and keeping the distinct idiosyncrasies of the trio!"

"She certainly is not an ordinary girl," grandma said with a smile, which showed thankfulness, not pride. "Let me see; where shall I begin?"

"Oh, at the beginning!" cried Georgia. "I doat on long stories."

Grandma shook her head.

"I am seventy-nine," she answered; "it would be a long story indeed if I were to go all the way back; but I'll tell you about my Phillis. I was a rich widow, living in Albany. I had lost my children one after another—six, my dear—and I only had my youngest girl left. I can't tell you how lovely she was; Phillis is like her a little, but her mother was positively a beauty.

Well, I suppose it was my fault, she grew up very wilful and headstrong. I was a weak woman always. Before she was eighteen she married Gerald French—against my wishes; I distrusted him from the first."

She paused for a moment; a slight dew gathered in her eyes. With one hand she softly patted Georgia, the other rested on the package of letters. Miss Grosvenor's interest and sympathy helped to increase self-gratulation at her opportune entrance, for she comprehended that if she had not chanced to find her in this retrospective mood, months might have elapsed with out the reticent old lady's bestowing such confidence.

"Was he young—handsome?" Georgia asked softly.

"Barely four-and-twenty, and the handsomest man I ever saw," returned Mrs Davis. "He was a Wall Street broker; had the reputation of being very wealthy—he was not—he was only a reckless speculator. They went to live in New York, and I went with them. Phillis was born within the year; her mother lived till Phillis was seven."

"And the husband—"

"My child, he was a man-tiger—that is the only word which can give you any idea of him. There was no misery, no degradation through which he did not drag us, for Elsie would not leave him, and I could not leave her. I couldn't tell you—I couldn't soil your ears with the story.

He got all my money—you can easily understand—he conquered me through her. The last of my fortune went to save him from exposure and punishment, then he turned me out of doors."

She told the story with a pathetic composure which touched Georgia more than any violent emotion could have done. The poor soul had lived so many years in the companionship of those terrible memories, that she had even grown used to the burden, as the galley slave does to the weight of his chain.

"He turned me out of doors in the middle of a winter night," she continued in the same slow, weary voice. "My dear, I wandered about the streets till morning. I had no money in my pocket: even at that pass I could not bear to go to any friend's house and tell the story, for Elsie and I had kept our secret through the whole. Well, I went back in the morning; he let me in, for my girl was dying. She lived only a week—heart-disease, the doctors said; so it was, for her heart was broken."

The tears were streaming down Georgia's cheeks; the old lady wiped them away herself, saying,—

"Don't cry, it hurts me. It must appear strange to you that I can talk so quietly, but, somehow, I have never seemed to feel anything very keenly since Elsie died, and I've had so many years now in which to be thankful that God took her."

Georgia could not speak; she lifted grandma's hand to her lips with a sympathy and reverence such as she had rarely felt for any human being.

"Of course, I have never told Phillis of these things," the old lady went on; "she can remember enough to know that her father was a bad man, but I think she never knew the worst."

"Oh! I hope not," Georgia said. "And what did you do after—"

"After Elsie's death there came an old friend of mine, a distant relation, too, of Mr French's; she offered to take Phillis, and bring her up as her own daughter. She was a rich widow, with two step-sons, but they were grown men, and had always hated her, so that her life was very solitary. What could I do? I was a poor, helpless creature, used all my days to luxury, and, besides, Gerald French would not have given Phillis to me."

"And after the lady took Phil?"

"I couldn't be a burden on my friends; I couldn't begin to work at my age; I could get no work even. I meant to go into a home. Mrs Granger was ready to help me, and I had still a few valuables left from my jewels, which would have aided. Well, just then there came back from California a man I had not seen for five-and-twenty years. He had loved me when we were young; he wanted me to marry him, old as we were, and I did."

"Ah!" exclaimed Georgia, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes, my dear, and we spent a good many peaceful years together. I had only two crosses —Mr Davis's ill health, and the separation from Phillis."

"He could not take her?"

"Her father would not hear of it, he hated me so. My husband offered him money, more than he could well afford, for he was not rich, but French even refused that. At least I could feel she was in good hands."

"But you didn't see her often? Didn't she visit you?"

"My husband and I went to California, and he soon fell into such wretched health that he could not travel. Once, when Phillis was about twelve, I went east. Mrs Granger met me part way, and I had a blessed visit with my darling."

"After that—"

"Ah, after that I did not see Phillis until a little over five years ago. My husband died quite suddenly. A stock company in which his money was invested became bankrupt just before, and I found myself with about three hundred dollars a-year."

"Oh dear! And Phillis?"

"It was only a fortnight after the funeral; I sat writing to Phillis, for we had corresponded regularly, and I had grown very anxious, because for many weeks I had failed to hear from her. Phillis walked into the room without any warning. Mrs Granger was dead—had died some time previous as suddenly as my husband."

"But didn't she keep her promise about providing for Phillis?"

"Yes, she gave Phillis sixty thousand dollars, the rest went to her step-sons. Phillis's money was in stocks or some company, she never really explained to me. At all events, they failed just after Mrs Granger's death; she had only a few thousand dollars in money by her; there was, besides, this farm, which Mrs Granger had given her, the only land she could will away."

"And then you were both poor again!" sighed Georgia.

"Yes," replied grandma, with a placid smile, "or we should have been poor enough, except for Phillis's head."

"But would not Mrs Granger's step-sons help?"

"No; they had always been jealous of Phillis; said their father's widow was cheating them for the sake of that girl; indeed, she would not have touched a penny if they had offered it."

"Of course Mrs Granger had been devoted to her?"

"Like a mother, and had educated her so carefully, so nicely, not only in books and accomplishments, but she trained her in housekeeping; she had herself always managed a large estate she owned near Albany, and Phillis helped her in that, and indeed actually managed it during the last year of Mrs Granger's life."

"And she was as brave as possible, I know, when the troubles overtook her," said Georgia.

"She came with all her plans arranged. She had been out here in Pennsylvania—got the house ready—then she took the rail to San Francisco, and on up country to me. So we returned together, and here we have lived ever since, and they tell me that in the whole county there is no better conducted farm than Phillis's."

"What a wonderful girl!" exclaimed Georgia. "Oh, how ashamed it makes me of my useless life."

"Nay, my dear, no life is useless because it does not hold actual physical labour! You may be thankful to have been spared Phillis's trials."

"The poor dear, just when she was at the age most to prize wealth and pleasure!"

"Yes; she had that last winter begun to go into society. Mrs Granger used to write me that she quite electrified those sober, stately Albanians."

"And never a regret?"

"We never speak of the old days. At first it seemed wiser not to do so. Now, we have got so out of the habit, that we should find it difficult to begin."

"And Phillis's father?"

"Some ten years ago, Mrs Granger sent me a newspaper containing an account of his death. He had been on board a sailing vessel bound for Havre. All the passengers and most of the crew were lost. Neither of us ever mentioned it in our letters; Phillis has never spoken to me about him. I don't think his name has passed my lips

since the day I showed my husband the journal that told us he could never do any more harm in this world. At least, now I can say, may God have mercy on his soul!"

She released her hand from Georgia's, turned to the escritoire, shut and locked it. The shadows of twilight had filled the room unnoticed by either. Georgia rose, saying something about going in search of a light. She would not risk a single question or word after the old lady showed that the subject was at an end. When Phillis called from the passage,—

"Grandma, are you there? Where is Miss Grosvenor?"

"We are both here," the old lady answered quietly.

"You might make it a little darker if you put down the curtains and shut the windows," laughed Phillis.

In another moment she appeared with a lamp in her hand, and glanced quickly from one face to the other; but though the traces of tears must have been plainly visible on Georgia's cheeks, she did not seem to observe them.

"I wish you would play and sing something, both of you," grandma said, after Phillis had given an account of their neighbour's indisposition, and the information that it was nothing serious.

They went into the parlour, and as Phillis was opening the piano, Georgia suddenly gave her a tremendous hug.

"I shall think you were a bear before evolution went far enough in your case to make you a woman," said Phillis.

Georgia held her off at arms'-length, and looked at her with admiring eyes.

"I know all about it now!" she exclaimed. "You are—oh, I don't know how to express what I think you are!"

"P. French, at your service," returned Phillis with a curtsey. "Grandma is a gossip, and you are a goose. Now I am going to sing, just to punish you both."

CHAPTER X.

IT was a lovely afternoon towards the middle of August; the old house still as some enchanted dwelling in a fairy tale.

The dogs dozed on the porch; the grey cat lay stretched upon the steps, too indolent to do more than whisk his tail impatiently when a bird flew out of the vines or tree branches, and daringly passed so near his face as to make the little flutter of its wings distinctly audible.

Grandma and Miss Grosvenor were keeping each other company in the verandah, but the warmth of the atmosphere had affected them also, and they sat silent. Grandma had fallen asleep, and Georgia might as well have been, so far as any control over her thoughts went; they wandered, and rested, wheresoever it pleased them, in a vagrant fashion, at once agreeable and unpractical. She was conscious of thinking that her brother, who had telegraphed his landing, and his dutiful intention of visiting Aunt Conyngham before coming to her, might arrive

by any train. That it seemed impossible somewhat over three months had elapsed since her own arrival in this tranquil haunt, and that, oddly enough, Denis Bourke had not appeared at the Nest since the previous evening. These aimless reflections, blended with her placid appreciation of the quiet; her enjoyment of the subdued note of insect and bird; her notice of the colour of leaf and flower; the white fleecy clouds in the molten blue overhead, and all the varied details which united into the harmonious whole that rendered her imaginatively sensuous comfort complete.

Down in the garden the bees hummed among the flower-beds, and kept up a pretence of work; the pigeons sat on the roof of the dove-cote, and now and then exchanged a few remarks in a soft half-complaining tone; the roses nodded in the light breeze, and perfumed the air with their breath; and the low murmurs of the brook could be heard from its pebbly bed at the extremity of the bower-like enclosure.

Under the shade of a knot of maple trees stood a low structure, so covered with blossoming vines, that it resembled a huge bird's nest more than anything else. This was P. French's dairy, built over the streamlet, and the coolest, most inviting spot imaginable on a summer afternoon.

P. French was there now attended by her youngest handmaiden. Cinders had been making butter, and Phillis, with her usual vigilance, had

peeped in to be certain that the operation was successful enough to suit her critical judgment. But there was nothing but praise to bestow upon Cinders's efforts; the butter was delicious to smell and taste, and very tempting the golden balls looked, shining through the water in which they were placed in readiness to send that evening to market.

Phillis began moulding a mass into fantastic shapes to grace the tea-table, deftly turning out little scrolls by the aid of a tiny machine; stamping other portions into round pats, printed with quaint devices, to please her whim, and waken admiration in Georgia's mind.

It would have been difficult to conceive a lovelier picture than she presented in the midst of her pastoral surroundings. She had pinned back the sleeves of her blue muslin gown, and tied a snowy apron over the front—a ray of sunlight stole in and touched her head, turning her wavy auburn hair to dusky gold; the tint of her dress brought out in full relief the exquisite delicacy of her complexion, which neither sun nor wind were ever able to injure; her very attitude was the perfection of unstudied grace; and the symmetry of the round white arms and dimpled hands, would have roused a painter to enthusiasm.

A young man came through the field which stretched between the dwelling and the wood, opened the garden gate, and took the path which led past the spring-house. Catching sight of the interior he stood still, thinking very justly that

in all his wide experience of his own country and foreign lands he had never seen a prettier tableau.

This amateur butter-maker (so his thoughts ran) might have served as a model for a painting of Marie Antoinette playing dairymaid,—such a graceful, aristocratic-looking creature,—such marvellous colouring, and such a heavenly mouth!

P. French, devoting all her energies to her occupation—a habit of hers, whatever the work might be—would have remained unconscious of this admiring scrutiny had not Cinders, arriving at the end of her task, turned with a pile of milk pans in her arms to take them out into the sun, and perceived the intruder. In her astonishment she let the top pan slip from its perch, and it fell with a loud ring to the ground.

"Laws, Miss Phillis!" Cinders exclaimed.

"Don't apostrophise me, Cinders—I am not to blame for your awkwardness," said Phillis French, without lifting her head.

"Laws, Miss Phillis!" repeated Cinders, startled out of her usually serene good manners by the suddenness of the apparition—still more by her certainty who the gentleman must be; though, since he had been expected any day during the last week, Cinders's great surprise appeared uncalled for. "Laws!" and down went a second milk-pan with even more fracas than the first, and left Cinders in a state of hopeless confusion over a performance which seemed to qualify her, the quick and sure-

handed, for a prominent place among the "awkward squad."

"Good gracious!" cried Phillis French. "Miriam the prophetess never made a worse noise with her cymbals! What has come to you, Cinders?"

She moved as she spoke, thereby treating the abandoned young gentleman to a full view of the lovely face he had been so attentively studying in profile.

"Laws!" gasped Cinders anew, and this time ran out of the spring-house by the door opposite to that near which the apparition stood.

Phillis French laid down the butter-mould and walked forward, saying with composure,—

"So it was in your honour, Mr Peyton, that Cinderella burst into that impromptu overture? You are very welcome, to be sure,—or you will be to your sister indoors,—the milk-pans, not the boarders, live here in the spring-house."

"I beg your pardon!" the gentleman exclaimed, with eyes and voice full of admiration and astonishment.

"Not at all," said Phillis French. "If you like butter-milk, you shall have some."

"I never tasted it," he replied.

"Then you shall remedy that misfortune at once," said she, and filled a tumbler with the creamy beverage, and presented it to him.

He sipped a little; made a rather wry mouth under his long moustache, and said unhesitatingly,

"It is delicious!"

"Drink it then," commanded Phillis French, her eyes beginning to dance with mischief.

"I—I—I'm afraid it is rather rich," said he, laughing at this summary way of punishing his deceitfulness.

"Oh, if you suffer from dyspepsia, pray don't touch it!" she cried anxiously.

"Never had anything of the sort in my life," he answered, rather indignantly.

She gave him a glance of commiserating doubt.

"You must have, you know—else you'd not be afraid to drink this, since you find it delicious," she insisted.

"I meant in appearance," he explained. "The mistress of the house must be a very good-natured person to let her young lady lodgers play at amateur dairy-work," he added.

"On the contrary, she's a very cross old thing," said Phillis.

"I suppose, then, she belongs to the honourable body of spinsters?" returned he.

"And acts as if she fancied herself keeping a private school instead of a boarding-house," said Phillis.

"Republican equality!" laughed he. "You and my sister must find her rather a bore."

"I do, most decidedly; but Georgia professes not to mind having her about everywhere—at table and in the parlour."

"Georgia has suddenly grown very democratic in her ideas," he said, somewhat disdainfully.

"I am afraid you will think so," she replied, with a sudden inflexion of sadness in her voice. Then she stopped abruptly—ejaculated, "Oh!" and looked somewhat frightened, as if in her heedlessness she had come near betraying something which Georgia might not like to have told.

"I shall depend on you to reveal to me the secrets of the prison-house," said Peyton, partly from a wish to lessen her girlish confusion, but more because he was desirous to establish himself as quickly as possible on grounds of familiar acquaintance with this pretty creature.

"Oh, I shall be sure to—I'm so careless!" replied she.

"Carefulness and primness ought to be left to elderly cats, like your Miss— What is the name of the person who keeps the house?"

"French," said Phillis. "P. French she writes herself, and she will hate you at once and for ever if she suspects that you know she was christened Priscilla."

"I shall call her so, then, the first time she is troublesome. In spite of Georgia's weakness—which seems odd enough—we will discover means to put the woman in her place."

"It would be such a relief!" cried Phillis, enthusiastically.

"You must find it rather a bore to be buried in this out-of-the-way spot for the summer?" he continued.

"Georgia pretends to like it."

"And you sacrifice yourself on her account?"

said Peyton, jumping to the conclusion that this lovely girl must be—Miss Moreland—a famous beauty and heiress about whom his sister had several times written to him. "But Georgia's last letter told me she was quite well and strong again. I should think the banishment from civilised regions might end soon?"

"You will be able to decide about that when you see how she looks," Phillis observed, and her words reminded Peyton that a little show of brotherly haste to meet his sister might be found becoming. He had positively forgotten everything and everybody in the pleasure of watching this graceful girl and listening to the soft, musical voice which was one of her great charms. "I suppose I shall find Georgia in the house?"

"I left her sitting on the porch, looking like the Princess Monchalanti in the fairy story. If you follow that path to the left you will reach her. Don't take the wrong turning and land in the kitchen."

"I should risk offending your Miss French in the very outset," said he. "I hope I sha'n't lose my way. What a pretty garden! The whole place is as charming as possible, if there were only some means of banishing the ogress."

"Then we might be deprived of our bread and pudding?"

"Ah, to be sure! Every creature has its use, they say."

"Even P. French!" she added, laughing. "*Au revoir*, Mr Peyton," and she retreated into

the spring-house as she spoke. So Maurice, having no further excuse to linger, went his way.

Phillis returned to her table and her butter printing, and had a low but hearty laugh all to herself.

"That young gentleman has more to learn than Georgia even. Luckily he has fallen among able teachers," was the reflection which ensued, and very wicked and mischievous Phillis French looked as she indulged in it.

Grandma had awakened from her doze, and finding herself refreshed thereby, had trotted off into the kitchen to ask Ninny some question. Georgia concluded that she had wasted time enough in aimless fancies, and rose with the intention of seeking Phillis. Just as she reached the steps she saw her brother, "uttered a joyful exclamation," and in another instant they were exchanging affectionate greetings.

"After all you have taken me by surprise," she said. "As you did not come yesterday, I decided that Aunt Conyngham would keep you over Sunday."

"I found there was no end to the dinner parties and the dancing, so I fled," he replied. "I couldn't get any trap at your station; they said I could shorten my walk by what the men called 'cutting cross-lots,' but I got out of my way and found myself at Mr Bourke's house; of course I'd meant to see you first. So as I was there, I got rid of the dust, and old Patrick showed me a path here through the wood."

"Then you have not seen Mr Bourke?"

"No; he had driven into the town. I say, I landed in the dairy, and there was such a lovely creature playing at butter-making. Your friend Miss Moreland, I concluded. You didn't tell me she was with you."

Georgia of course divined that he had fallen upon Phillis. She was hugely diverted at his blunder, and determined not to set him right.

"One can't remember everything," she said.

"If I'd known that beautiful girl was here, Aunt Conyngham shouldn't have kept me a day."

"What a charming brother!" laughed Georgia.

"I really believe you are handsomer than ever," said he; "I suppose your being out of health was just a caprice."

"I am very well now, at any rate."

They began to ask each other questions about mutual acquaintances in Europe and America, and talked for a few moments in the broken, rambling way people do after a lengthened separation, where there is so much to be asked and told that for a time conversation is discursive.

"You ought to have some letters for me," said Peyton finally. "I wrote two days ago to the bankers to forward them here."

"Yes; three came this morning; I'll bring them to you." Georgia ran into the house; just after she had passed up the stairs, Peyton perceived a tall, angular woman coming along the passage. Spinster was written in every fold of her dress—every line in her face.

"Laud's sake!" she exclaimed, pausing in the doorway.

"The ogress! I suppose I must do the polite," thought Peyton. He rose and bowed with great ceremony. The ogress looked still more astonished, but evidently was not to be outdone in elegant civility; she seized the tail of her gown in one hand, waved the other in the air like a truncheon, and dropped two curtsies in rapid succession.

"Why, how *do* you do? I hope you're pretty well. I never see you looking better, though, *to* be sure, I never had the pleasure afore! I s'pose you're Miss Gros-ye-nor's brother—why sartinly! I've heerd all about it—you're come to stay to Denis Bourke's. Wal, a bachellor's house ain't much te brag about gin'rally, but Tabitha Perkins hez got facoolty enough ef she's let alone, and she won't be meddled with neither—and there she's right—though Bourke he ain't a Betty, I will say; and old Patrick, though he's as obstinate as a mule and a little Jack donkey under the waggon, knows too well which side *his* bread's buttered to try it on ef he wanted, which mebby he don't, for let's be just before we're generous."

She stopped to take breath, and Peyton, not knowing what else to do, bowed again. The ogress immediately performed her other salaams, more remarkable than their predecessors, and burst out anew.

"And so you've come to be nigh your sister,

Mr—Mr Peyton? I ain't very good at names, but I got yours fixed in my head. Southern, ain't it? *To* be sure! Wal, I must be off, fur I've got to go to the corners, and I'm late! If so be you find yourself round anywhere near *my* territory just run in; don't stop for ceremony on my account. Good-bye, Mr Peyton."

With another salute and engaging smile the ogress fled. As she disappeared Peyton muttered something which evidently was not a compliment, to judge by the expression of his face. He heard the sound of suppressed laughter behind him; turned towards the porch, and saw again the charming vision which had quite startled him by its unexpectedness a short time before.

If possible, the young lady looked still more lovely. True, she had arranged her sleeves in an orthodox fashion, and it seemed a shame to hide such plump white arms; but as she stood framed in among the trailing vines, she made a second picture as attractive to his artistic eyes as the first had been.

"I have encountered the ogress," he said.

"So I perceive," she answered.

"And you mean to say that you and Georgia have been able to endure a three months' stay under that horrible creature's roof?"

"We still survive," she said, gazing beyond him into the hall, from whence her laughter was echoed by Miss Grosvenor, who had come noiselessly down stairs and stood listening to their conversation.

Peyton glanced over his shoulder and said,—

"Georgia, you are a most unnatural specimen of a sister! What did you mean by running off and leaving me at the mercy of your inhuman landlady?"

"Bless me, Phillis! What have you been doing to my innocent and unprotected brother?" cried Georgia.

"I offered him butter-milk to drink, and showed him the way to the house—"

"But you left me to fall into the clutches of the ogress," he interrupted. "Georgia, instead of standing there to laugh in that fiendish manner, I think you might do me the honour to present me to your friend Miss—"

"Oh, I am satisfied as to your identity," Phillis interrupted in her turn; "it is mine that requires establishing."

"Miss French, allow me to introduce my brother. I wish he were more worthy your acquaintance and his sister's merits, but we must be merciful," said Georgia, with mock solemnity.

"Miss French!" Peyton could not believe his ears. This lovely, aristocratic-looking creature a relative of the ogress. Oh! and what had he said? But the similarity in name must of course be the only tie between them. Still, why had Georgia not set him right when he had spoken of her as Miss Moreland?

He gave his sister a quick glance of mingled

helplessness and vexation, which caused both girls to laugh more heartily than ever.

"Mr Peyton, the ogress makes you welcome to her den," said Phillis, sweeping him a low curtsey.

This elegant girl the landlady!—a person who took in summer lodgers! About as easy for Peyton, with his ideas and prejudices, to credit, as if somebody had shown him one of Lawrence's most refined portraits, and declared the original had been a barmaid.

"I think these mystifications come under the head of what the Arkansas man called 'unjustifiable tricks on travellers,'" said he.

Georgia perceived that he was not convinced, and afraid he might say something which would prove an annoyance to himself, if not to Phillis, hastened to add,—

"Miss French really has the good fortune to own this lovely old place; she is to be congratulated, is she not?"

"Indeed—yes! It is—perfect!" he exclaimed, glad of anything to say.

"And you have made acquaintance with our neighbour, Miss Raines," pursued Georgia. "I knew you would enjoy her conversation, so I did not come downstairs and interrupt you."

"You told me she was the mistress of the house?" he said to Phillis, in a reproachful tone.

"Oh, no—you said so, and I was too polite to contradict," replied Phillis. "He thought her the model of a spinster landlady, Georgia! I

am so sorry for your disappointment, Mr Peyton. It was really touching to see you trying to soften her obdurate heart by your fascinations."

"He has succeeded! She will invite him to tea by the day after to-morrow," cried Georgia.

"Your conduct is abominable!" declared Peyton. "It was sheer pity for you two unfortunates that made me attempt to propitiate the dragon."

"You see, Georgia, he has adopted a new name for her—ogress belongs to the person of the house," said Phillis.

"I ought to have known that such an enchanted bower must have a fairy princess for its mistress," returned Peyton laughing, and trying to get his wits back, though still marvelling by what freak of fortune this girl could have become the proprietress of a "country boarding-house." But that must be all nonsense; Georgia had styled the place so in her letter just to mystify him. Miss French was certainly a lady in their own rank of life—Georgia's intimate friend, doubtless. The pair had hidden themselves for the summer in this picturesque retreat, to rest after the fatigues and triumphs of their winter in town.

At this instant Cinders appeared in the hall, still somewhat confused by the recollection of the fallen pans and her own awkwardness, unprecedented in the annals of her history.

"Miss Phillis, if you could step this way," she said.

"I am tired, and cannot take a step in any direction," replied that young lady, resting herself on the doorstep. "Is it about the butter, Cinders? Well, what does Rogers say?"

"He says he is only giving fifteen cents a pound—"

"Tell him he will have to give me eighteen," broke in Phillis; "he knows he will, so I wonder he wasted his time in useless argument. Oh! and tell him he can have the chickens, but he waited so long to make up his mind about the pig that I sold it to Mr Morley."

While speaking she covertly watched Peyton with infinite delight at the effect produced by her words. She knew that he looked positively stupid with bewilderment. Was she really a farmer? Were her dairymaid efforts no town lady's freak to amuse a dull hour, but a *bona fide* business operation, with pecuniary benefits for a basis? Did she actually sell chickens and rear pigs? And there she sat, the personification of elegance, while volubly pouring forth talk which, according to Master Maurice's theories, was as much out of keeping with her appearance, as the dropping of frogs from the mouth of the beauty in the fairy tale. And yet theories and opinions were at fault, for he told himself that if she had been discussing matters prosaic even to repulsion, she would have rendered them charming by her accent and face.

He experienced the sensation Georgia had so often undergone—that the girl was absolutely

reading his thoughts. He perceived that his sister was hugely enjoying his dazed astonishment, and felt that to give her a shaking would be a relief. Luckily he bethought him of the letters Georgia had brought, and began to glance at the superscriptions, as if eager to learn their contents.

"Your brother finds these domestic details wearisome, Georgia," said Phillis French in a tone of compunction. "It is no wonder you do, I am sure, Mr Peyton; but fortunately for me, since I have to live among them, I do not own a superior intellect and super-refined tastes."

"Oh!" he ejaculated, but she turned towards her handmaid again, apparently without noticing that he had begun to speak.

"That is all, I think, Cinders. Ah! ask Mr Rogers to call at Dwight's and say that if those ox-yokes don't come to-morrow, I shall not take them. Tell Ninny she need not stop her preserve-boiling. I'll come out and make the biscuits for tea." Cinders departed, and Phillis French continued, "I hope you like hot biscuits, Mr Peyton? Oh! I forgot, if you have dyspepsia you ought to content yourself with stale bread."

"You poor fellow!" cried Georgia. "Bless me, how could you develop such a commonplace malady?"

"It is an unwarranted aspersion of Miss French's," said he.

"He refused butter-milk, Georgia. What other reason could he have?"

"None!" Miss Grosvenor pronounced decidedly. "Ah! here comes grandma!"

The dainty little old lady, who greeted Peyton with such sweet cordiality, was as unlike that young gentleman's idea of "farmer-folk" as her grand-daughter, but her appearance took the conversation out of the domestic region in which Phillis French would have found a malicious satisfaction in confining it. Maurice, who shared his sister's amiable habit of being attentive to age, devoted himself to the new-comer, and was able to revenge himself a little on the two girls for the recent teazing, by somewhat ignoring their presence.

But he had the pleasure after a while of giving Georgia a surprise.

"There comes Mr Bourke," she said. "Maurice, you will have an opportunity to make his acquaintance."

Peyton hurried down the steps, with both hands extended.

"Denis, old man!" he cried.

"Peyton, my dear fellow, I'm awfully glad to see you," returned Bourke, and the two shook hands warmly, while Georgia sat watching them with wide-opened eyes.

"Whoever would have dreamed of our next meeting being out here in the heart of Pennsylvania?" exclaimed Maurice.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to explain where your last one took place?" said Georgia,

recovering her breath. "You never told me you knew my brother, Mr Bourke."

"Oh! you had forgotten," said Phillis; "just as Mr Peyton forgot that you had told him I was not Miss Moreland."

"You are a wretched traitress!" said Georgia, and joined in the laughter of the others, although it was at her own expense.

CHAPTER XI.

IT was rather late when the little party separated, considering that two of its members had duties which would necessitate their being astir in the morning.

The evening had been delightful to Peyton; the conversation of a nature to make him forget his puzzled wonderings in regard to the incongruity between Phillis French and her alleged occupations, as completely as it did the change between Bourke's present position and the surroundings in which they had last met.

After hearing Phillis sing in the most heavenly fashion, and then sitting with her in the porch, while the moonlight heightened and spiritualised her loveliness, it was rather a shock to be interrupted in a metaphysical discussion concerning Heine, and obliged to recollect that life held a very prosaic and common-place side for her. Nay, destiny had gone further than a mere turning the poetry of her young existence into prose; had shown herself a cruel, relentless task mistress.

This lovely creature was forced down to a level where she had to perform coarse physical labour, such as the fastidious young man would hitherto have pronounced impossible for a lady to endure —meaning impossible, mentally, I suppose, since, so far as bodily strength went, no more could be required than that expended by scores of his acquaintance on the ball-room or hunting-field, or any other haunt where idle people work so hard in pursuit of pleasure.

Denis Bourke it was who dragged him forth from dreamland. Peyton had lured Phillis into the porch under pretext of showing her some effect of moonlight, and detained her there in conversation; while Georgia and Bourke were fitfully trying old duets and glees at the piano, till at last Denis suddenly cried out,—

"This may answer for people of elegant leisure, but I know a young man who has to be up at daylight."

"And I know a young woman who is in the same predicament, for she has soap to make," rejoined Phillis. "If you come to-morrow, Mr Peyton, you can have the pleasure of improving your acquaintance with Miss Raines, for she has promised to assist in the operation. She may like Heine too, for what I know."

Georgia and Bourke came out into the verandah, and they all stood talking nonsense for a few moments; then the gentlemen took their departure.

Miss Grosvenor waited while Phillis closed the

shutters and locked the hall-door; then they went up the stairs together.

"You haven't told me how you like my brother?" said Georgia, as they reached her door.

"I haven't had time," said Phillis.

"To make up your mind?"

"Oh, you know I always do that at first glance,—for the pleasure of changing it."

"He is very handsome, is he not?"

"Yes; but, you see, I don't fancy handsome men."

"And he is a genius."

"And geniuses are always mad."

"Don't be a provoking P."

"I'm too sleepy; good night!"

"Oh, dear, and I'm not a bit sleepy."

"That's because you have an ill-regulated mind," said Phillis. "Now let me go, else Ann Raines will get here before I am up in the morning."

"Admit that Maurice has fascinating manners?"

"You might as well call him a demon at once," broke in Phillis, with one of the spasms of violence whereby she now and then startled Miss Grosvenor, from their contrast to her ordinary manner, and her habit of jesting upon every possible subject, until ordinary acquaintances must have doubted whether she could ever speak or think seriously, "Heavens! Georgia, never say that of any person you want me even to tolerate; I loathe the very sound of the word."

"What an odd girl you are!" exclaimed Miss

Grosvenor, holding up her candle to look more closely at her friend. "I declare sometimes you quite frighten me by glimpses of a P. French whom I don't in the least know."

"You must study her by daylight," returned Phillis. "Poor Georgia, after all these weeks, you can still be taken in by my dramatics."

They exchanged good-nights and entered their respective rooms. As Phillis put her light down she caught sight of her own face in the mirror.

"Fascinating!" she repeated, with a shiver of disgust. "Oh, my petted, dainty Georgia, how little do you know about this hard, old world after all! But come, P. French, it won't do to fall to thinking, else we shall have no rest, and we are going to make soap to-morrow, miss!"

She prepared for bed without delay; and once there, kept repeating nonsense rhymes, till at length she fell asleep.

Phillis French had passed through very black waters and into the quiet haven she had reached. Echoes from the awful tempest which had darkened her early girlhood still came up at intervals, presaging possible danger for the future. But she had done what was right; she had also guarded herself in every practicable way; and thanks to her self-control, could most of the time really be as cheerful as she appeared to others. Even when temporarily borne down by the weighty memories so dismal that they haunted her slumber like nightmares, or troubled by a dread that fresh suffering was at hand, she managed to conceal

her disquietude, or else show it in a whimsical fashion, which prevented those about regarding her excitement as serious.

"Now, what did she mean, or did she mean anything?" thought Georgia, as she stood before her toilet-table. Then she perceived a letter lying in the open drawer, which caused her to forget Phillis French and her oddities.

During the earlier weeks of her country sojourn, Mr Caruthers's epistle had afforded Georgia a mild kind of pleasure; but later, the consciousness of not having attempted the fulfilment of her promise, to give due consideration to the writer's desire of uniting their destinies, had sorely detracted from any satisfaction in the perusal of his communications.

During this last month Mr Caruthers's letters had grown more frequent; and the two received within the fortnight had changed Georgia's passive gratification into positive disquiet. It seemed to her that the tone had altered strangely, going so far even as to imply that she had pledged herself to much more than was really the case; and Aunt Conyngham wrote in the same fashion, only with greater frankness.

It was a very unwise move on Mr Caruthers's part, and entirely inexcusable in a woman so experienced as Aunt Conyngham; but occasionally that wary lady, after having systematically followed out a plan of action for months and months, would be seized with an impulse of

haste, and upset her projects by some ill-advised step like the present.

The letters caused Georgia to feel that she was unjustly treated; that her liberty of action was being tampered with—an attempt, indeed, being made to fetter her, and nothing could have been more unfortunate for Mr Caruthers, and more disastrous to his hopes, than rousing such a suspicion in her mind. It was doubly unfortunate that the allies had chosen this precise time for changing their tactics, because, when the month opened, Georgia, without yet beginning to give serious reflection to the subject, had reached a point when, she vaguely admitted to herself, that somewhere in the future an acceptance of Mr Caruthers's proposal seemed the one possible and fitting culmination of her destiny.

To-night the recollection of these later letters vexed and distracted her. To get away from thought she sat down by the window, after having extinguished her candle, and remained there for a long while gazing out into the night. She had meant to fix her mind upon the pretty scene; but, instead of doing so, she fell to dreaming in a fashion almost unknown in her experience of sweet and enticing chances; of the happiness which women must know who were young and fresh enough in feeling to fall in love —to love, no matter at what cost—with a strength and passion which the need of sacrifice only increased.

In the meantime her brother and Denis Bourke

had walked homeward through the fields, stopping now and then to kindle a pipe or admire some wonderful effect of moonlight on upland or wood, and discoursing in the frank way that men who really like each other are able to do after a long separation, when neither has any special secret to keep, and so is relieved from the necessity of guarding against the fear that inadvertent speech may rouse suspicion in the listener's mind—trebly acute through sympathy—that a chord is amiss somewhere.

"I say, old man, this coming together again is very pleasant," Maurice began, as they crossed the stile in the first meadow.

"Very," Bourke replied; "and as improbable as pleasant."

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing more natural than that we should meet," rejoined Peyton. "People are always turning up everywhere. If I go to Cairo I'm sure to encounter fellows I left in Charleston, or some other equally distant place."

"You feel so because you are a confirmed wanderer, and have lost the faculty of surprise. It is different to a man who plods on in one quiet spot as I do here—even a little event seems an adventure of importance."

"Anyway, losing the faculty of surprise does not involve losing the power of being glad," said Peyton cordially. "I liked you immensely—and I had reason."

"Yes, if liking demands liking," laughed Denis.

"I understand. Allowing one to thank you was never in your line. Well, on the whole, I think I am very magnanimous not to hate you, considering that you once did me a great favour."

"Favour, be blowed!" cried Denis. "Say what you please, it did seem uncommonly odd when Miss Grosvenor suddenly told me your name. I daresay she had spoken of her brother, but, naturally, I took it for granted he shared her cognomen."

"So you have been here several years?"

"Over four."

"But how the dickens did it happen that you ever found your way?"

"Oh, once this side of the big pond, it happened naturally enough," Bourke replied carelessly.

"Hang it, man, can't you see I'm dying to hear how the first happening came about, and am afraid of appearing curious. Though you will not believe it mere curiosity which makes me wish to learn the story."

"Not much of a story, my boy," returned Denis, knocking the ashes out of his pipe against a convenient tree. "I had very little money left, and it was necessary to do something. I thought of Australia—took my passage—changed my mind at the last moment——disposed of my berth, and steamed over to America instead; following my Paddy instincts, I suppose."

"Well?"

"No, it wasn't well. A New York broker, whom I had known, persuaded me to speculate in some infernal stock. I was to 'realise' I don't know how much, but there proved to be a slight mistake; it was the chaps on the other side of the stock who did that, and I lost my money."

"A nice go that."

"On the whole it was," said Denis, in a philosophical tone; "for I heard of this farm, and put my remaining spondulux into it in order to keep it safe; and it is very safe. I couldn't get it out again if I wished."

"It makes you a living?"

"I live like a fighting-cock; only my battles are with labour; but I work no harder than a hunting man does."

"How did you lose your money in the first place? The turf, I suppose?"

Bourke had filled his pipe again and was lighting it. Peyton accepted his silence as an assent.

"But the uncle. Did he sit quiet and see you go to the dogs?" continued Peyton.

"Oh, here! I'm a taxpayer and a respectable citizen. Don't talk about my having gone to the dogs!" laughed Bourke. "The uncle—sit quiet! My dear fellow, he kicked me out neck and crop, and politely told me to go to—well, a worse place than you suggested."

"The old sea-serpent?"

"You see he always hated me—that was natural. I always wanted to return the sentiment, but somehow I could never get beyond indifference, which, considering the circumstances, was decidedly unnatural," Denis explained, in that matter-of-fact tone which sometimes irritated Georgia. "There, that's the end of fytte the first. I landed in Yankeedoodledum. It's the end of the story for that matter, for nothing has happened since worth the chronicling. Here we are at the house, and heartily welcome you are, old chap."

Peyton perceived that he had revealed as much as he desired to do, and, of course, further question was impossible. They entered the room in which hung the portrait that resembled Miss Grosvenor, and for a few moments sat there in silence, Bourke absently gazing at the picture which the lamp-light brought out in full relief, and Peyton occupied with his sympathetic wonderings in regard to his friend's troubles in the old home across seas.

"It is an uncommonly rum world," Maurice at length observed, with the inelegance of expression so frequently affected by the elegant young men of our day, though the same terms from the mouth of a person not "of their class" would be regarded as a proof of the speaker's hopeless vulgarity. "An uncommonly rum world."

"Not half a bad world though," returned Bourke. "But you have not told me what

you've been doing in it since we lost sight of each other."

"Oh, wandering up and down the face of the earth, like Satan in the Book of Job," said Peyton; "trying to amuse myself — succeeding pretty well too. You know I never went in for the *blasé* dodge."

"If you hadn't happened to be unlucky enough to own a big fortune, you'd have got far on the road to fame before this," said Bourke. "You have painted a picture or two, I know, because I've seen them noticed; but painting now and then in a *dilettante* fashion isn't work."

"I never thought it was, you incorrigible old preacher."

"But what I want to get at is, what you have felt—what has happened to you. Not Maurice the exquisite, but the real man inside."

"Nothing—just the old story. You can imagine it easily enough. Nothing new ever happens. Yes, by Jove! there does sometimes. For instance, stumbling on a girl like Miss French. Who is she?—what is she?—how the deuce does she come to be living here?"

"The reason seems obvious enough; because it is her home."

"You know what I mean. How the dickens does it happen to be her home? One would as soon expect to find a nightingale in a hen's nest."

"You a painter, and malign that lovely old place of hers!"

"The place is a gem, like its owner. But

it's humbug, isn't it, about her managing the farm and all that?"

"Not a bit of it; she's the best farmer in the county. Why, she can turn her hand to anything. Luckily, she is not called on often to do much more than superintend, but there's nothing she can't do, from ironing clothes to mending a rake."

"But there's something dreadful in the idea of a woman like her being brought down to common-place duties."

"She isn't brought down; she raises them to her level, and turns them into poetry."

"That's no go, you know. I don't believe a word. The ideal shepherdess is very pretty, but when you reduce her to reality, she becomes a very heavy-footed, hard-handed damsel."

"Oh, P. French's hands—"

"Awfully pretty!"

"Exactly. After all, her hard work hardens the ends of her fingers no more than playing the harp does a fine lady's."

"But her education—her accomplishments?"

"Plenty of good schools to be found everywhere in America."

"Yes; but her elegance, her style? You don't mean to tell me, I suppose, that many dairy-women are like her?"

"Oh, nature has a way of her own of managing things. How often you have seen a roturier look like a duke, and the descendant of a hundred earls like a clown."

Peyton did not even hear, he was so busy trying to find some comparison for this bewitching creature, who had at first sight taken so powerful a hold upon his excitable fancy.

"She's like nobody, in a book or out, after all," he said suddenly. "Though, I don't know; well, perhaps some of Shakespeare's women modernised—say, Miranda, with a good deal of Beatrice's devilment in her, or—"

"Oh, come!" interrupted Bourke. "If you begin in that fashion, you'll keep me here till morning. Let me show you the rookery I have got in order for your accommodation."

They went upstairs, and after a little more pleasant talk, Denis bade his friend good-night, and betook himself to his chamber, shaking his head now and then, and frowning portentously, after a habit he had when deep in thought.

But as he got into bed, his meditations apparently had reached a tolerably satisfactory point, for he muttered,—

"If he flirts, he can't hurt Phillis, she is too thoroughly on her guard—knows too well that she mustn't get in earnest. As for him—he's the best fellow in the world, but he will never be seriously hit, so I needn't worry over either of them."

With which philosophical and thoroughly masculine view of the subject that had occupied his thoughts, Master Denis speedily addressed himself to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was still early, even according to country habits, when Peyton went downstairs the next morning, but Bourke had already left the house.

"Ye see, sir, av he busies himself for a few days, he'll be quite at his aise for taking a little divarsion, and there's a power o' quail and partridges coming," Patrick explained, as, after offering his master's excuses for his departure, he ushered the guest into the room, where a tempting breakfast awaited him. "It's hopin' I am that ye'll divart yoursilf enough to keep Masther Dinis company for a month or two, sir."

"Oh, I don't mean to go away till he sends me off, Patrick," replied Peyton, who, like most desperately proud people, secure of their own position, was always gracious to inferiors.

After he had drunk his coffee, Maurice sauntered about the house and grounds for a while, smoking a matutinal calumet, charmed with everything he saw, though his observation of exterior objects was a good deal blunted by an

absurd wonder which kept dancing to and fro in his head, whether Miss French would look as lovely in the morning as she had done on the previous evening, and if there was depth enough to her character to render her grace and wit interesting for any length of time.

He suddenly remembered that Georgia had said he could come for her to walk as early as he pleased. His watch informed him that it was now half-past seven, so he might as well go; destiny would perhaps reward his brotherly attention by a sight of Phillis French, although even in the country one could not ostensibly pay a visit at that unholy hour.

He took the path through the wood and fields, but was so immersed in idle, pleasant reflections, interspersed with contemplation of the lovely landscape and much lazy watching of the crows, that he strayed into a lane which brought him out below the grounds, and close to the barn and carriage-house. There was another small building in the same enclosure, all hidden from the garden by a row of pollard willows, and hearing a tremendous clucking and crowing and flapping of wings, Maurice opened the gate and entered.

A few steps forward afforded him a view of Phillis French feeding her poultry, which she had just let out of their dwelling for a run in the yard, the palings being too high for any possibility of escape on their part.

"Good morning, Mr Peyton," called Phillis.

"Don't come any nearer, or you'll frighten my family, and so lose the pleasure of seeing them eat. Luckily for you, I am more than an hour late, though the poor things are half-starved in consequence."

The fowls were in a wonderful state of excitement; they flew about her head, and perched on the edge of her basket; old hens fought for good places for their chickens, ducks quacked, turkeys gobbled, and some of the pigeons sailed over from the dovecote and mixed with the crowd, though it was evident that they despised the whole set. And as Phillis pointed out to Peyton, when she had flung the last grains among her troop and joined him; the hens in turn looked down upon the turkeys, though these latter were so magnificent in their arrogance, they never perceived the contempt; while the entire society united in ignoring the ducks, who seemed to congratulate themselves on speaking a separate language.

"I have never been able to decide whether turkeys are idiots or poets," Phillis said, looking so desperately pretty in her simple chintz costume that Peyton decided he had not even done justice to her charms on the previous evening.

"Perhaps a combination of the trio, like many human verse-makers," he suggested.

"The old gobblers are simply imbecile with pride," continued Phillis. "It is the most absurd performance to see two of them getting ready for a battle. During the first hour

they'll strut up and down parallel to each other, their tails spreading wider and wider, and their wattles growing redder and redder; but when they do begin, you can't separate them. It's the hen turkeys that are the poets. You'll see one of them stand in a pouring rain, staring up at the sky, and let their brood cry 'weet, weet,' and catch their deaths without her knowing it."

"Dear me! is that the way female poets behave?" asked Maurice.

"If they do, you men could not blame them, since you say women are only imitators of your sex, when they go beyond small talk and mild pianoforte playing," replied Phillis. "But don't be satirical early in the morning—it's wicked, you know, or if you don't, you ought to. Just look at that superb cock—he's my bonniest; did you ever see such a gorgeous creature? His name is Prince Beautiful, and he comes when I call him."

"So do most creatures, I imagine."

"La! is that a compliment?" she inquired, with a delicious affectation of rusticity in voice and face—so perfect, too, that anybody who had never seen her till that instant would have sworn it was natural. "My grandma wouldn't like it; she said last night that young city men were as dangerous as my old Potiphar—that's the big turkey gobbler there that's biting his newest wife; he's the crossest old chap in existence."

"Be merciful, and I'll never err again!" cried Maurice laughing.

"At least please work up to such poetical speeches by degrees; don't overwhelm my country innocence by bursting out all at once in your full splendour," she continued mercilessly.

"I thought you told us you were to make soap this morning? That's being practical enough, I hope," returned he, a good deal amused, but still sufficiently teazed by her raillery to want to end it. "I felt certain yesterday that all your talk about work was a pretence, and here you are, amusing yourself with your chickens."

"I was till you came to amuse me," she cut in. "The soap was in process of making three hours ago, that's how I happened to neglect my family. It must be nearly boiled enough by this time. We'll go and see presently, and you shall have an improving conversation with Miss Raines."

"The ogress I saw yesterday? Heaven forbid!"

"Oh, yes, you will," she persisted; "but it is a pleasure that must be deferred, because there's a hen's nest I want to find. Marie Antoinette and the Queen of Sheba have united to deceive me. They are hiding their eggs somewhere. Cinders has hunted, Ninny has hunted, and so has Mr Sykes. Now you and I will take the matter in hand, and see if our combined intellects are a match for two pullets."

"But where are we to look?"

"First in the grass yonder; then you must turn over those old barrels, and then we'll try the barn," said Phillis, as gravely as if she were proposing a search for a lost child.

They hunted in every nook and corner, while a little knot of hens, headed by the two queens Phillis had named, followed them about and exchanged remarks in an undertone, looking so contemptuous, that it was plain their observations were of a disparaging nature.

"I am sure they are laughing at our stupidity," Phillis said. "Now we will try the barn."

"Oh, certainly," returned Maurice cheerfully, though in his heart he thought the chase had been sufficiently prolonged, for he was getting very warm, and had to exercise a great deal of care, to Phillis French's secret delectation, in preserving his immaculate white serge suit from dust or rent, while stooping among the casks and inserting himself into spaces much too small for his person. Wherever she perceived a hole or corner difficult to get into, and more difficult to get out of, Phillis French became immediately confident that precise spot must hold the hidden treasure, and she ordered him to investigate it, with a tyranny as relentless as it was graceful and coquettish. And now having exhausted the difficulties of the yard, she took the path towards the barn.

"We are certain to find it here," she said, as they reached the door. "Oh, good gracious, it

is locked! Just put your hand between the boards. Sykes must have put the key there."

Maurice obeyed, but withdrew his hand empty.

"Sykes must have put the key in his pocket," he observed, and tried hard to conceal his satisfaction, but Phillis French perceived it, and was determined not to let him off so easily.

"After all, I dare say the nest is in the carriage-house," said she; "Sheba made one there last year. Dear me, in Bible days it was Solomon bothered Sheba, and now it is Sheba who is too much for Solomon!"

"Too much for the female sex also, in your person," returned he.

"Ah, I can bear it, because it gives me a high opinion of the resources of feminine nature," said Phillis.

She led the way round to the side of the yard upon which the carriage-house doors opened. Maurice, devoutly hoping that Sykes might have locked them too, and carried off the key; but, no, they stood invitingly ajar.

The ample space within could boast no vehicles, except a cart, and the pony waggon, and in one corner was heaped a pile of mattresses which Mr Sykes had been filling with straw, and had not yet carried over to his house. The room was well lighted and very lofty, some fifteen feet above the floor. A beam stretched from end to end of the chamber, and between ten and twelve feet higher a platform stored

with hay ran along one side of the building attainable by means of a ladder.

There were a good many places to search upon the ground, but when they had all been inspected without success, Phillis French glanced towards the ladder, and then regarded Maurice with an engaging smile. He knew that his fate was sealed. She had forced him already into numerous ridiculous positions, but of all sights a long-legged man mounting a long, narrow ladder, is the most ridiculous, as he was well aware.

"The nest is not down here, that is certain," said Phillis French in her softest voice, and again she gazed at the ladder, and again smiled sweetly at him.

"Do you think it is up there?" he inquired, in a tone which showed that he expected her to reply in the negative.

"I've not a doubt of it," she answered with an air of profound conviction; "not a shadow of doubt."

"I don't believe that two such sensible fowls as their majesties would take so much unnecessary trouble," said he.

"Oh, it is only men that mind trouble," Phillis French replied.

"Now do you really want to see me look perfectly absurd going up that ladder?" he asked laughing.

"I want you to go up most certainly. I don't insist on your looking absurd," rejoined Phillis with gravity.

"But—"

"We will find the nest first, and argue afterwards," she interrupted. "Somebody must mount, and I can't. Unless you are in the same predicament, I wish you would do it."

Maurice gave her a glance half of amusement, half vexation, and strode towards the ladder; but just as he reached it, a boy of fifteen put a sandy head and a mischievous face in at the door, and called,—

"Oh, Miss French, I've been a hunting you high and low! Please, can't I speak to you a minute, fur it's most partic'lar."

"What do you want, Joe Grimshaw?" she asked. "I am sure you haven't brought me a telegram."

"I've got no telegrums for nobody, and don't mean to no more," returned the boy, who had walked in, and was standing before her. He ended his sentence with three emphatic nods, and then looked round for a peep at Maurice. "That's Miss Gros—ve—nor's brother," he added; "I seed him yesterday."

"I suppose you didn't come to give me that information, Joe?" said Phillis. "What do you mean by saying you shall carry no more despatches?"

"I wanted to ask if you hadn't some odd jobbs fur me? I kin turn my hand to a'most anything, Miss French, and whatever I be, I ain't lazy, you'll own that," said Joe eagerly.

"Oh, Joe! What have you been doing? I

hope you've not been sent away from the office," cried Phillis.

"I've sent the office adrift, and I don't pertend to go back to it," said Joe stoutly, though in spite of the energy of his language, his manner to his interlocutor was perfectly respectful. "I kin stand a good deal, but when it comes to bein' told I'm no better'n a thief, and cathauled about by old Tom Potter, why that upsets the bilin', and I know you'll say so too, Miss Phillis."

"Is Tom Potter the clerk in the telegraph office, my boy?" Maurice asked, unable to refuse a smile.

"Yes, sir, he is; and he's the very chap that tried to be slacky to you last night, when you came in with Mr Bourke to send the telegrum, and if you'd kicked him instead of jest hammerin' his head a bit agin the wall, he wouldn't have got half what he desarves."

"Never mind that," said Maurice; "tell us about your misunderstanding with the gentleman."

"Oh, I understand it all clear enough," cried Joe. "This is the way it was, Miss Phillis. Last night in comes Mr Mozier, the storekeeper, in a wax, and he says to Potter,—'You're a pooty fellow, you are. I've just got a letter to say a telegrum was despatched yesterday morning, and you've never sent it round.' Potter he got very red, and says he, 'I did. It's all that blasted boy's fault. He's lost it.'

And then says I, 'You're another. You never give me no telegrum for Mr Mozier.'"

"Well, you had not lost it?' demanded Phillis.'

"Not a lose—I hadn't had it!" shouted Joe. "After a good deal of jawin', I just jumped over the counter into his place, and afore he could stop me, I'd upset the waste-paper basket and there it was. He'd put it into a 'welepe and directed it, and then forgot, and it got husked off his desk. He tried to grab it, and said it wasn't that, but I threw it over to Mr Mozier."

"Well?"

"Mozier, he went off swearin', and then Potter lit on me, but he didn't make twice out of that," said Joe triumphantly; "so then I threw up the sitivation, for the same thing has happened afore and I was blamed. This time he got found out, and I says to myself the best thing for me is to git up and git afore he fetches me into some scrape, and mother she said so too."

"I am very sorry, Joe," said Phillis.

"It's all just as I've told it, Miss French; 'you can ask Mr Mozier," cried Joe anxiously.

"I know that—you always tell the truth," said Phillis.

Joe's face at once lost the defiant expression it had worn while detailing his wrongs; his features worked, and it was plain that he had hard work to keep back his tears. But he shook himself, and gave a furtive punch to the straw hat he held, and so managed to preserve his stoicism.

"What makes me sorry, Joe, is that I've no work for you," Phillis explained kindly. "Sykes hired a fresh boy the other day, and I thought him one hand more than we needed."

Joe looked so crestfallen that Maurice felt as sorry for him as Phillis did. He went up to her and said in a low tone,—

"Denis was saying last night that we should want a lad to carry our guns and do all sorts of errands—the one he has had has been ill, it seems—shall I take this chap?"

"You couldn't find a better boy than Joe," returned Phillis; "he is mischievous, but industrious, and honesty itself—do take the poor fellow."

If she had asked him to accept the charge of a white elephant and several Siamese families into the bargain, Maurice could not have refused when she spoke in that tone, and regarded him with such eagerly pleading eyes. He turned back to Joe who was watching their brief colloquy with undisguised interest.

"What do you say to my hiring you for a few weeks?" he asked. "You will have to be ready to do anything and everything, you know."

Joe's grey eyes shone with delight, but he did not even smile.

"Miss Phillis 'll tell if I'm handy and willin'," he said, suddenly growing a little embarrassed. "I know I'd like dreadfully to come, if you'll take me, sir."

"Then it's a bargain. About the wages, we must consult Mr Bourke," added Maurice.

"Fix it anyhow you like, it'll be all hunkey, I know," cried Joe, at last showing two rows of white teeth in a broad grin."

"That is settled," said Phillis. "Now, Mr Peyton, we can remember the Queen of Sheba and the ascent to her palace."

Maurice fancied that he saw an easy way out of his difficulty.

"Then you are engaged, Joe. I'll take you from this morning," he said.

"Right agin," returned Joe. "I'm engaged, and I'll be as engagin' as the school ma'am when examination day comes, and all the beaux is bobbin' about the place."

"Then," said Maurice, carelessly, "you may begin your service by hunting a hen's nest up in the loft yonder."

"Not a bit of it!" cried Phillis French, before the boy could speak. "You hire Joe to do your work, Mr Peyton; he can't do mine. You engaged yourself for that hen's nest hunting, and I hold you to your bargain."

"But since I can do the business by proxy much more thoroughly than I could perform it myself?" he suggested.

"It would not answer the purpose," Phillis French replied with decision. "A bargain is a bargain."

"What a Shylock disposition," said he, laughing. "Well, will to-morrow answer?"

But Phillis French did not laugh; she looked grave enough, even vexed and contemptuous, he thought.

"Do you or do you not mean to keep your promise, Mr Peyton?" she asked.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, still laughing, but a good deal irritated; "I have seen a great many unreasonable young women—"

"And now you see a reasonable one," she broke in. "A promise is a promise, be the matter involved big or little."

"Oh, if you take the affair so seriously. You really insist on my going up that ladder?"

"Of course, if there is any danger of your falling," cried she.

The sentence was not clear, but the expression of her face made it evident she meant to suggest that he was afraid. Peyton flushed a little; he was almost angry. Phillis French saw it and chuckled inwardly; she had been trying from the first to make him lose his temper.

Joe Grimshaw had retreated a little, so that he could lean comfortably against the cart. There he stood chewing a wisp of straw, and apparently neither heeding nor understanding their conversation, but the twinkle in his eyes betrayed him.

Maurice strode to the ladder and began to mount. He had scarcely ascended half-a-dozen rounds when his coat caught upon a nail. He extricated it impatiently and flung it down on the floor. Joe Grimshaw picked up the garment, dusted it and laid it on the seat of the pony-

carriage with as much care as if it had been a baby. He looked preternaturally grave, but in order to do so he was obliged to pucker his mouth into such odd shapes that Phillis French had much ado to keep from laughing.

Peyton appeared as little absurd as a man could under the circumstances, for he went up the ladder as nimbly as a sailor or a monkey. Had Phillis French known what a finished gymnast he was, she would have cast about for some other means of vexing him.

Peyton reached the loft and disappeared for some instants behind the heap of hay. Presently he emerged towards the further end and called,—

"No signs of the Queen of Sheba's habitation, Miss French."

"You are sure you have searched carefully?"

"Quite sure."

"Then you may come down. We will try the barn to-morrow."

"I only promised you the carriage-house," said he.

The boards extended perhaps eighteen inches beyond the beams which supported them, and he was standing on the very edge.

"Oh, Mr Peyton, take care!" Phillis exclaimed, in an altered voice. "You are awfully high up; I didn't know it was so far."

She was alarmed by his carelessness; he determined to tease her a little, by way of having revenge.

"I rather like the attitude, now I am here,"

said he, walking lightly along. "Don't you want to come up?"

"Please go further back — please!" cried Phillis.

He laughed heartily at her distress, still advancing. He reached a place where the hay had been removed; one of the planks was loose; it bent under his weight—bent so far he could not spring back. Peyton heard Phillis utter a cry, echoed by Joe Grimshaw's voice. He looked down—saw the beam which traversed the room good ten feet below — a vigorous leap might enable him to attain it.

There was not even a second in which to deliberate; he took in the situation at a glance. His gymnastic training stood him in good stead; he stepped more heavily to give the board greater sway and himself more impetus, jumped, swung through the dizzy space, caught the beam with both hands, threw one leg over it in a flash, and sat still for a moment to recover his breath.

"Joe, Joe, the ladder!" shrieked Phillis.

Joe ran to fetch it, but tug and pull as he might, with Phillis in her terrified impatience rushing to help, the ladder was so firmly nailed at top and bottom that their united strength availed nothing.

"Good heavens! there's not another long enough!" cried Phillis. "Joe, run for a hammer. Don't move, Mr Peyton—don't!"

"Stop where you are, Joe!" ordered Maurice. "I'm not going to wait here an hour while you

unfasten the ladder! There's no danger, Miss French!"

He rose to his feet and walked along the narrow beam with as much composure as if he had been treading a floor.

"By ginger! he *is* a plucky one—what a head!" exclaimed Joe.

"All the same, Joe, I don't care to do circus for your amusement any longer," laughed Peyton, overhearing the involuntarily uttered tribute to his coolness. "Lay two or three of these mattresses on the ground—I can jump down then."

"You can't! you can't!" groaned Phillis. "Don't try—don't."

"I can do it easily, I assure you," he replied.

Joe seized a mattress and Phillis one, which they dragged under the spot where Peyton stood, and heaped two others above them.

"Push them further out, Joe," he called; "I am going to jump, not fall.

They obeyed; in their haste not noticing that the beds were too close to the cart. Maurice was so occupied in watching Phillis, that he did not observe it either. He jumped, landed on his feet, but his left arm struck the wheel with such force, that he would have fallen had he not caught the spokes with his right hand.

There was an instant's silence; Phillis had sat down flat upon the mattress, white as a sheet.

"Wal, I never see the beat of that even with them trapeze chaps that was here last

summer!" Joe Grimshaw exclaimed in admiring tones, which suddenly changed to alarm as he cried out, "Oh, Mr Peyton, you've hurt your arm—it's a bleeding!"

Phillis started up at once—her presence of mind quite restored by the idea that she could be of service.

"It's nothing," Peyton said, glancing at his shirt sleeve, through which the blood was oozing.

"Bring that stool, Joe," was all Phillis said. Joe obeyed, and she added, "sit down, Mr Peyton."

He obeyed too. Phillis unbuttoned his wristband and rolled up the sleeve; the cut was not deep, but the arm was already turning black from the bruise.

"You are sure it is not broken?" she asked in a choked voice.

"Good heavens! no—it's nothing whatever! See, I can move it with perfect ease," he said, though the doing so made him wince a little.

Joe Grimshaw flew out to the horse-trough in the yard, and came back with a basin of water. Phillis wet her pocket handkerchief and carefully washed the hurt, Peyton yielding to her ministrations with praiseworthy submission, and thinking, even while he laughed and jested, to relieve her mind, that he would willingly have borne a wound more severe for the pleasure of feeling the touch of her pretty fingers, and watching the pain and solicitude which softened her eyes.

But the blood would not stop flowing, and Phillis perceived that she must resort to other measures.

"Run to the house, Joe," she said, "and tell Cinders I want you to get me something out of the press in the store-room—don't say a word else."

"No, ma'am," said Joe.

"On the top shelf you'll find a roll of adhesive plaster, bring it, and be quick!"

Away sped Joe. Phillis asked Peyton for his handkerchief, which she bound tightly above the hurt, then held his arm firmly in both hands, too much engrossed to remember that the situation was somewhat peculiar.

They both remained silent for a few moments; at length Phillis said,—

"I—I'm so sorrow! I beg your pardon, Mr Peyton."

But he only teased and laughed at her, in a fashion which proved him an adept in the line she was herself so proficient in. Joe performed his errand in an incredibly brief space of time, and Phillis produced a pair of scissors from her pocket, with which she cut some slips of the plaster.

"Find the lantern, Joe, and light the candle," was her next command.

This being done, she warmed the strips to make them stick, and disposed them about the wound in a very scientific manner. She had to try several bits before she succeeded; but at

length the flow of blood was checked, and Peyton able to resume his coat.

"Georgia will never forgive me," faltered Phillis.

"Then we'll not tell her or anybody," said Maurice gaily. "I say, Joe, if you open your mouth I'll—what was it you said the irate Mr Potter did to you?"

"Cathauled me about," responded Joe, involuntarily clenching his fist at the recollection.

"Well, whatever that may be, I'll do something worse if you tell I hurt my arm," laughed Peyton.

"I won't, sir," said Joe, "but I know I shall tell about the jump. It ain't no use to promise —not if you thumped me blacker and bluer than that there arm o' yourn; for I know I should. But there won't a fellar at the Cormers believe me when I tell 'em; so you needn't mind."

"No wonder if they don't," said Phillis, glancing up at the beam with a shiver.

"That's all right, then," rejoined Peyton; and, by way of finding an excuse to get rid of the lad, he added, "now, go to the post-office, Joe, and see if there are any letters for me. You can take them up to Mr Bourke's house, and wait till I come.

Joe departed; and between delight at having found a situation so quickly, and the excitement of witnessing his new employer's acrobatic feat, he was so exultant that he ran some distance before he remembered he had meant to ask a

favour. Back he dashed, and met the pair at the door.

"Ef you ain't in a hurry, may I go and tell mother I'm hired?" he asked. "She's been so kind o' oneasy in her mind, Mr Peyton."

"Go, of course," Maurice answered, and Joe flew off again. "Upon my word," Peyton continued, "I like that trait in the boy."

"Joe is as good as gold," pronounced Phillis, "and so quick and intelligent that one can't scold him for his mischief."

"You must have rather a fellow-feeling for him, so for as that goes," returned Maurice maliciously.

"Your arm doesn't pain you much? You are sure the hurt will be nothing?" she asked, brought back to solicitude by his words.

"Nothing at all," he replied; and now he ventured to add softly, almost tenderly, "if the hurt had been ten times worse, I should have been amply repaid by your care and sympathy."

He looked down at her as he spoke with eloquent eyes, which had wrought trouble in many a woman's heart; for it was as natural to Maurice Peyton to flirt as it was to breathe.

Phillis French's face changed, as if by magic. She looked more wicked than he had yet seen her, and began to laugh.

"Now that the danger is over, one must own it was all very absurd," said she. "You did look so droll going up the ladder. When Joe tells about the leap, people will decide that you

are a circus performer. They already think Georgia a public singer. I daresay you'll both get into the *Manchester Times.* How pleased your aunt will be."

Peyton was too wise to persist in trying, as many men would have done, to give the conversation a sentimental turn. He met her on her own ground; and when half-an-hour later they reached the house and found Georgia, they were rallying each other with the freedom of two old friends, and she was charmed to find what progress they had made in their acquaintance.

Maurice's arm was so stiff that he could not conceal the fact of having received a hurt, but he allowed Georgia to think it had happened in Bourke's stable, and it was not until it got well —an operation which took several days—that she learned how it really occurred, and then through a mock-tragic confession on Phillis French's part.

She and Joe both proved correct in their conjectures,—when the boy told the story of the leap, the people at the Cormers unanimously declared that Bourke's visitor must be "a furrin tight-rope walker," and at the same time were equally unanimous in refusing to credit the tale, in consequence whereof Joe got into half-a-dozen personal conflicts with lads much bigger than himself, but as he came off victorious on each occasion he did not mind.

Phillis French insisted on Peyton's inspecting the soap, and doomed him for a full quarter of

an hour to endure the clatter of Miss Raines's tongue, then ran off, to his great disappointment, on the plea of important duties.

He remained until Georgia told him he must go, because it was luncheon-time, and he departed, fearing that he should not be gratified by another sight of the young mistress of the dwelling, but as he passed the kitchen she came out and whispered, with a rueful face,—

"I am afraid your arm is very painful?"

"Indeed it is not," he averred, though somewhat untruthfully.

"I am so sorry it happened," she added.

"And I am glad," he answered, with so much meaning that she deferred her contrition for solitary musings, transformed herself at once into a Nixe, and teazed him more unmercifully than ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT Maurice Peyton had been able to endure so much spoiling, and come out so little injured thereby, was a proof that his character possessed qualities unusually strong and sterling, for the guides of his childhood and the friends of the later portion of his pilgrimage, which had lasted some eight-and-twenty years, had certainly done their best to ruin him.

His widowed mother had married again when he was a boy of five, and took her son to her new home in England. Young as he was, Maurice had bitterly resented his parent's second marriage, but his delight in the baby-sister, born a twelvemonth after, reconciled him thereto, and the doating tenderness he received from his step-father gradually roused a corresponding affection in his impulsive nature.

Since seventeen he had known no guide but his own will, wherewith his nominal guardian was too weak and indolent to cope. His school-days had passed at Harrow ; in accordance with

a promise he had made his mother, he returned to America, and entered Harvard; was rusticated before he had half finished his course; went back to England, and distinguished himself at Oxford, though not altogether in the way which wise people might have thought desirable; for there were few eccentricities and extravagances which he did not perpetrate, condescending to just sufficient effort in his studies to show what he might have achieved had he been disposed.

Since then he had lived principally in the great European capitals, where his talents, his handsome face, and his wealth, had given him an enviable position. Women had courted him and committed insane follies on his account, as idle, pampered society dames will for a man who acquires the reputation of being dangerous; but though Maurice's career had been anything but a model, the makings of a cold-blooded *roue* were not in his composition, and his reverence for his mother's memory, and his chivalrous devotion to his sister, kept alive a respect towards their sex, which, unhappily, the conduct of too many women of the world helps rapidly to dissipate from the minds of young men.

He had as many half-playfully expressed cynical theories as Georgia, but they went no deeper than hers, and in one particular he was more honest than she; he always declared himself capable of a love that would be lasting, and only despaired of finding the object upon whom

his serene highness might worthily lavish the gift.

Flirt he must and would, but it was to be said in his favour that he had never been guilty of attempting to win the affection of any innocent, truthful girl for his own amusement; and there was reason in his creed, that girls angling for such husbands deserved small mercy, and married women who flirted, none whatever. As he said, the latter must, voluntarily and with wide-open eyes, go out of their way to reach a point where a man ventures to profess love for them, and must have as thoroughly lost all decent and virtuous principle as a woman who has really broken the seventh commandment, when they can get far enough in the mental keeping of their marriage vows to find pleasure in knowing that a man would make love if he dared, yet deeming themselves pure, because they stop short of the irrevocable precipice, a descent down which would at least prove they possessed hearts and passions, and so owned some trace of humanity, instead of being as unwomanly as the syrens of old, as hideous in the sight of any clean-minded person as a whited sepulchre filled with all possible nauseousness of decay.

Phillis French had been a new revelation to Georgia, but she was a more wonderful one to Maurice; for he knew even less than his sister of the manner in which people live and are educated in America, outside of a certain privileged set.

Like most young men who have acquired varied experiences, Peyton had been in the habit of thinking he understood women, but Phillis French proved a puzzle he found it impossible to elucidate. He could not even approach near enough to a solution to decide when she was in jest or earnest, and in the early days of their acquaintance he gave up all hope of ever finding out her state of mind if she chose to guard the secret.

He was charmed with the friendship which grew speedily up between them; and yet it piqued him, half unconsciously, that she should be as easy in his society as if he were his own grandfather.

Phillis French appeared to receive his attentions as a matter of course, not as a right—that would have been oppressive—but as something too natural to deserve a second thought, and, worse still, as if she had been so surfeited by devotion that half the time it was only good nature which made her endure it.

But apart from this phase of their acquaintance, and her unmerciful ridicule of any approach to sentiment, their intercourse was as frank and open as it could be between two youthful persons of opposite sex.

When both chanced to be in a rational mood, they could talk sense, read books, discuss grave subjects; but, as a rule, the demon of mischief would take possession of one or the other in the very height of their seriousness, and they finally

agreed it was better to leave weighty topics to Georgia and Bourke, since they never seemed tired of debating thereon.

Phillis was the first woman Peyton had ever met who possessed the ability really to teaze him ; scores of other women had vexed, excited, and, in turn, wearied his capricious fancy ; but Phillis could teaze him, and that power, along with the impossibility of ever telling whether she was in fun or earnest, gave her a strong hold not only over his imagination, but his imperious will.

If Maurice had been called upon to give an explanation of his feelings or his plans, he would have been more puzzled even than Georgia ; he had not yet reached the stage where he perceived any necessity for serious meditation. He and Phillis persevered in the conduct they had adopted on their introduction ; there was a great deal of gay skirmishing—of quarrelling for that matter—because they seldom passed more than eight-and-forty hours without indulging in a battle-royal, wherein, whether right or wrong, Phillis invariably gained the victory, and forced him to apologise. Half the time he could not decide if she were really angry or only acting ; but in either case, she managed to make herself more bewitching than any girl he had ever encountered.

He met her one afternoon, about half-a-mile from her house, driving obstinate Bones along at a great rate.

"Alone!" he said in surprise, as she clutched the little steed, who always looked wickedly on the watch to run away. "What has happened? Where on earth is Georgia? It is as wonderful to see you without her as it would have been to meet one of the Siamese twins without his brother."

"I am driving over to Deacon Foster's," replied Phillis. "As for the other twin, she is busy arraying herself in cloth of gold and diamonds, in order to be ready for the reception of those princes and potentates who are coming."

"Oh! old Featherhead and his wife," cried Maurice impatiently. "I had forgotten they warned us we might expect a visit to-day."

"A pretty way to mutilate the name of the governor of the State!" said Phillis French. "Yes; Mr and Mrs Featherstone—the Honourable Mr and Mrs—are about to grace my humble dwelling by their presence. The bare thought put me in such a flutter that I ran away."

"They're an awful pair of bores," sighed Peyton. "I don't know which is the worst—the governor or his governess."

"All the same, you must go to the house and help your sister to entertain them. Put on your best behaviour—such as it is—and show yourself worthy of grand society."

"Oh, there's plenty of time," returned he. "They will not come till late; it isn't three yet. How long shall you be gone?"

"I should say about an hour; but as I am a

conscientious woman, I'll not certify to the precise minute."

"You will be back long before they get to the house. I'll go with you, I mean," he added quickly; "will you allow me to have that pleasure?"

"Oh, good gracious!" she exclaimed; "you are beginning to practise your fine manners, I hardly recognise you. What shall I say? honoured sir, the pleasure will be on my side—only, I don't want you."

"Please let me go," he said, stepping into the carriage.

Phillis French gave the signal to Bones, who kicked up his heels, and started off like a reindeer. For some seconds Phillis neither spoke nor took any notice of Peyton. He glanced furtively at her, and finally asked,—

"Are you vexed? Did you really want me not to go?"

"I'd forgotten you were there," she replied. "Of course you must come, if you insist; I can't put you out of the carriage." Then they talked pleasantly for a while, but when they had driven nearly two miles, and were not far from Deacon Foster's house, Phillis French suddenly said,—

"I told you, did I not, that you would have to walk back?"

"Indeed, no! Why should I?"

"Because I am going to take home a bag of seed corn, and it will have to occupy the place where you are seated."

"But you can leave that? Joe Grimshaw shall come over for it."

"Thanks! but the bag of seed corn and I must go home together."

"Now, are you really in earnest?" he asked.

"I am," she said, and her face expressed her sincerity.

"Then I may as well get down here," returned he, a little nettled.

She stopped Bones at once. Maurice jumped out of the waggon, and lifted his hat very ceremoniously.

"Permit me to thank you for your consideration," said he.

"Well, it was lucky I remembered it before we got quite to the house," she replied. "A pleasant walk to you; and, Mr Peyton—" raising her voice, for he had walked away.

"Miss French?"

"The next time I tell you not to do a thing, please remember that I mean what I say."

"Thanks; I will," he answered.

Phillis drove on. The last sound he heard, as the waggon disappeared round a turn in the road, was a burst of laughter. He could not help laughing himself, vexed as he felt. He sat down on a green bank by the road-side, lighted a cigar, and concluded that he might as well wait a little before setting out on his walk. He fell to musing over Phillis French and her faculty for being delightfully exasperating, and, as was usually the case when thinking about her, he grew so absorbed

that a considerable time passed without his knowing it. The noise of wheels roused him from his reverie—she had come back. It was vexatious to be found there, but too late to scale the fence and conceal himself behind the bushes, for the carriage had turned the angle in the road. On dashed Bones, and to increase Peyton's vexation, he saw that the seat by Phillis was empty—she had not brought the bag of corn—her assertion of the necessity for so doing had been a mere pretence to tease and punish him.

"Why, how do you do?" she cried, stopping the pony with some difficulty, and speaking in a tone of surprise, as if she had not seen him for several days, and would never have dreamed of encountering him in that spot. "Been having a walk? If you feel inclined for a drive, I shall be delighted."

They got on charmingly again. She began asking questions about Italy, and made him describe, as he could do when he liked, places and people in a delightful way. They reached the road which led up the hill towards Bourke's house. Phillis French guided the pony into it.

"Where are you going?" Peyton asked.

"To take you home."

"But I don't want to go there."

"I shall be easier in my mind if I leave you safe in your own abode," she persisted; "you are too young and beautiful to be left straying about on the highway."

"But I shall have to walk all the way back—"

"The exercise will be good for you."

"Or run rather," he added, glancing at his watch; "and then I shall barely be in time."

"In time?" she repeated.

"I suppose you have not forgotten that the Featherstones are coming?" he exclaimed. "Now please be good, and drive to your house."

"Not for worlds!" she cried, with a shiver and a look of fright. "I'm so glad you reminded me. I wouldn't arrive till those grandees have departed for anything. The bare fact of knowing they have been there will upset my nerves for a week—to encounter them would scare me to death."

She gave Bones a little taste of the whip, and he flew on like a mad creature towards the hill. It would have been difficult to jump out, even if Maurice had felt inclined.

"Well, by Jove!" he exclaimed, laughing in spite of himself. "You certainly are the most provoking girl I ever met in my life."

She dropped the reins. Bones seized the bit in his mouth, and immediately ran away.

"Do you want to break your neck?" demanded Peyton, snatching the reins, and compelling Bones, after a struggle, to moderate his pace. "Now, pray, why was that done?"

"Because I did not choose to drive you home," said she.

"Then I will you," he answered, and turned the pony's head in the opposite direction.

There was a brief silence. Phillis French broke

it by asking in an amiable tone, as if there had been no pause in their conversation about Italy,—

"So you stopped a month once at Ischia? It has always been one of my favourite dream-haunts. I've an old book full of such lovely engravings of the island."

Maurice was beguiled into fresh descriptions, which lasted till they reached the lane that led to Phillis French's barn. Very often they drove in that way, and walked through the garden to the house, for Phillis always hated to have her gravelled road cut up. Bones dashed up the lane.

"I suppose it makes no difference," Maurice said, as the pony came to a halt before the open barn doors.

At the same instant Joe Grimshaw came running towards them.

"Oh, Mr Peyton, I've been a-hunting you everywhere!" he cried. "The gov'ner's over to Miss French's, and his wife too, as fine a fiddle, and they can't stop; and Miss Georgia she's in a terrible taking 'cause you couldn't be found."

Maurice sprang out of the waggon, saying,—

"Now then, Miss French, we must bestir ourselves. Be good enough to show how agile you can be, for I mustn't wait."

"Go to the house, Joe, and say Mr Peyton is coming," said Phillis.

"Don't you want me to unharness the pony?" he asked.

"Do as I tell you," said Phillis.

Away went Joe. Peyton looked at Phillis French; she quite glared at him in return.

"Will you get out?" he inquired, perhaps a little imperatively in his haste, feeling that her jesting was ill-timed.

"When you can ask me politely—"

"I hope I did so."

"And when you have begged my pardon," she added.

"That I certainly have no necessity for doing," cried he a little hotly, for her face and voice were angry.

"Then I shall stop where I am," said she, and at the moment Bones, tired of waiting, trotted indoors before Maurice could catch the bridle.

The pony stopped in the middle of the barn, and began peacefully nibbling at a bundle of hay which lay on the floor. Maurice paused an instant, and then followed. Phillis French sat leaning back in the carriage, pensively regarding the rafters which supported the roof.

"Miss French, *will* you get out?" pleaded Peyton. "What will these people think of me?"

"At present, what I think is the important thing," she replied, without looking at him; "and I think you very rude."

"I assure you I didn't mean to be."

"Then beg my pardon."

"No; that would be owning I had done or said something wrong intentionally, and I have not," he said, beginning to wax obstinate.

"I shall stay here till you do," returned she.

"Ah! now do get out," he urged.

"You can go to your friends."

"Of course I can't leave you sitting her alone."

"Oh! I have a newspaper. I can amuse myself," she replied, and drew a journal from under the cushion of the seat, unfolded it, and began to read.

"Good heavens! Miss Phillis, you don't mean to sit there?" cried he, half laughing, and wholly vexed.

"I see the harvests have been generally very good," said she, in an interested tone, without lifting her eyes.

"Miss French!"

"Oh! dear me, Victoria Woodhull has been making another speech. I must read that."

"My dear Miss French — I do beg—only think what a position you are placing me in."

"I suppose you mean what a position you have placed yourself in, if you mean anything," she answered coldly, her eyes still on the paper.

"Now, do you really want those visitors to think me a savage?" he asked.

"I have already told you that their opinion does not concern me. I think you a savage—and worse—that is enough."

"It is rather too much, and very undeserved," cried he. "Miss French, you really must be good enough to descend."

"When you have begged my pardon."

"I vow I never will do it!" he exclaimed, so

vexed by her persistency, and her uncalled-for anger; for now he really believed her angry—that he could not control himself. "Never!"

"Then I never will get out," said she. "I vow that too."

Again he had to laugh, irritated as he was.

"It is too bad!" he cried.

"Much too bad!" retorted she. "It would be better if you had the grace to feel ashamed, instead of laughing. I assure you, Mr Peyton, you will find it no laughing matter."

"Why, merciful heavens! I have no more idea why you are angry, Miss Phillis, than I have what is going on in the moon," cried he.

"The paper says it will change to-morrow," said she, glancing at the sheet again. "I mean the moon, not your paucity of ideas."

"Come! We will compromise; if you will get out, I will beg your pardon after—though I don't know what for."

"Hum! hum! Lehigh Railway stocks are looking up," murmured Phillis, turning the journal inside out.

"Did you hear me, Miss French?" he asked.

"Oh yes, I heard you," she answered.

"Well, do you agree?"

"No!"

Then she was deep in another paragraph, which apparently possessed a great interest for her. And now Joe Grimshaw's voice sounded from the distance, calling in agonised tones,—

"Mr Peyton—*oh*, Mr Peyton! The gov'ner's

got to go, for he's promised to meet a deputation at half-past four, and he's only just time to get to Wachuset."

"Miss French—you hear?"

"I hear!"

"Will you—"

"Beg my pardon."

"If I do, it will be—"

"Without reservation, Mr Peyton—without adding to your original offence by excuse or argument."

Again Joe Grimshaw shouted.

"Oh, do hurry up, Mr Peyton!"

"Miss French, I beg your pardon!" cried Maurice quite furiously. He extended his hand; she stepped lightly out, smiling and thanking him pleasantly.

"Can't you speak?" she asked.

"You told me I was only to beg your pardon."

"Very well, you have done it, and a great goose you were for your pains," replied she. "Now run fast and make your peace with the governess."

"But why were you angry?" he asked, looking back over his shoulder.

"I wasn't; but since you chose to think me so, I kept up the pretence. Tell Joe Grimshaw to come and take Bones—oh, here he is—go, go Mr Peyton."

Away Maurice dashed; caught the departing guests, and excused himself as best he might. The old governor had been too busy admiring

Georgia to notice her brother's absence ; but the governess, as the young people styled her, was far from being content. She afterwards spoke of Maurice as a young man who had been greatly injured by wealth and adulation, and hinted fears that he would sooner or later reach a bad end—if not in this world, certainly in the next ; and though she expressed her grief that the nephew of her valued friend, Mrs Conyngham, should be reserved for a fate so dismal, she stated her dread with an air of cheerful satisfaction which somewhat belied her assertions.

Maurice tried to appear a little stately towards Phillis, when he and Bourke came to the house in the evening, but she coaxed him in the most delightful way ; walked up and down the porch leaning on his arm, and suddenly, when he was thoroughly brought round by her efforts, and even almost reduced to the verge of sentiment by her airs of contrition which set so prettily in her, she told Georgia and Mr Bourke the story of the drive, and described Peyton's words and manner in a fashion so droll, that the two laughed till they cried, and Maurice himself had to laugh as heartily.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS GROSVENOR'S surprise — long since forgotten—when she discovered that her first month of summer quiet had passed, was more than equalled by the astonishment her brother felt when, on reckoning up the weeks, he found that four weeks had elapsed since the date of his arrival.

The growth of his liking for Denis Bourke into a warm intimacy would have appeared natural and fitting to anybody who knew them both, though whether the relations which had grown up between Phillis French and himself would have seemed fitting to a stern judge—say, Aunt Conyngham for instance—whatever the opinion in regard to its naturalness, was open to doubt.

A desperate flirtation would probably have been the name given by that lady, or any other severe critic, to the intercourse between the pair. Assuredly there had been no downright love-making on Maurice's part, though, had he reflected, conscience would have forced him to admit that his attentions, and often his language,

would have made many girls believe that at length such consummation must arrive.

But Phillis received his gallantries with perfect composure; laughed at his pretty speeches, and often irritated him sorely by her insensibility. From the first, he had told himself that for once he did not mean to flirt; it would be ungenerous, considering the position in which she stood; then, too, Georgia had warned him to be cautious, because she could not and would not permit so much as a passing shadow to disturb her friend's quiet.

Still, it was exasperating to have produced no impression—to see her as indifferent to his flatteries as if he were her brother. Indeed, in all ways she kept him in a state of such constant excitement, that these weeks had proved as full of enjoyment as any he had ever spent, insupportable as he would in advance have pronounced the uneventful life he was leading.

But there were no unpleasant mentors near to utter comments, and Georgia and Bourke had so fully decided that the couple were equally heart-whole, and likely to remain so, that they ceased to bestow any thought upon the matter. Nor did Maurice trouble himself to think; he accepted the condition of things as the pleasantest experience which had ever crossed his path, and put by reflection as completely as his sister had at one time, possessing the advantage of her in this respect—there was no disquieting subject to start up now and then, and remind him that

sooner or later it must be faced, and an important decision reached.

It was no fault of their relative that the brother and sister remained so culpably negligent. Aunt Conyngham wrote often enough, and expatiated amply enough upon duty, according to her reading thereof, to keep that inexorable Moloch constantly before their eyes. She would certainly long since have come in search of Georgia and carried her off, had not Maurice been there to aid the young lady in her written pleas and reasons for prolonging her sojourn. Peyton unscrupulously embroidered the opinion of a physician spending the summer at Wachuset into a positive injunction on the part of the well-known and weighty medical authority, that she must tarry into the autumn if she wished to return to town with her health fully established.

This was an argument which even Aunt Conyngham could not resist, especially as it was vigorously supported by Mr Caruthers, who had been more alarmed by Georgia's illness and subsequent delicacy than the gravity of the case really warranted. Besides this consideration, he still held firm to his belief that her present seclusion would prove favourable to his hopes. Her absence had taught him that his sentiments went far beyond the ground of esteem upon which he had based them in the outset; and though not a vain man, Mr Caruthers possessed sufficient of our sex's fatuity to believe, when he found how his own feelings had warmed and deepened, that

once his wife, he should be able to develop Georgia's into a corresponding depth and warmth —teach her to love him, in short.

Since man became a civilised being, that theory of teaching a woman to love has been a creed so fixed in the masculine mind, that even earthquakes overtaking countless ill-fated marriages founded on such perilous soil have proved powerless to shake it; and unless women learn to recognise the danger, the duller portion of humanity will cling to and act in accordance therewith until the end of time.

September had come, but there were few signs of autumn visible; and as in that blessed altitude the nights and mornings had continued cool during the entire summer, there could be no reason for regret that the monarch showed slight disposition to abdicate in favour of his successor.

Denis Bourke owned a good saddle-horse; Peyton had hired three other steeds for equestrian duty, and provided an additional pair of stout cobs, which took a big, roomy barouche up and down the mountain roads in capital style. So there were numerous riding and driving expeditions, long walks, picnics, at which the brother and sister met agreeable people, well-mannered, well-dressed, and were often secretly astonished to find that the most interesting of the ladies was perhaps a country school-mistress,—the best cultivated young man acting as a book-keeper, or filling any position that would enable him to earn money enough to resume his winter's col-

legiate course, from standing behind a counter to taking photographs.

It was not until later, and then only by accident, that they learned how often Phillis French and Denis Bourke had risen at unholy hours and done work enough for a whole day, long before their respective guests had wakened, in order to enjoy their diversion with easy consciences, certain that everything indoors and out had been left in such order and forwardness that their subordinates could make no blunders, or even hope, in case so inclined, that any shirking or shortcoming would escape the vigilant eyes of their employers. But both had now increased leisure, and to the whole group each day seemed more delightful than its predecessor.

Birds were as plentiful as old Patrick had prophesied, and Peyton thought that in all his experience of Scotch moors, he had never enjoyed shooting excursions so much as those in which Georgia and Phillis usually met them at luncheon-time, with amply provided baskets, as gleefully carried by Joe Grimshaw as if they had been thistledown, instead of a goodly weight of marvellous pastries, cunningly devised meats, and carefully concocted beverages, peculiar to the land which has a genius in that line.

A proud and happy youth was Joe in those days, and though these thoughtless young people spoiled him sadly, he was too genuinely proud and honourable to commit the error of growing careless or presumptuous. He adored the whole

party, but Miss French and Peyton were the special objects of his admiration. His delight in their merry war of wits was inexpressible. Sometimes, in order to vent it, he used to rush behind a tree, or any other shelter convenient, and stand on his head, wildly waving his legs in the air, and shrieking in ecstasy till he brought the four to learn what had happened. He tried occasionally to repeat their sayings to his mother, who was as happy as Joe in the good luck which had befallen him; but though he amused her extremely by his narrations, he was never himself satisfied with his reproduction, and invariably wound up by saying,—

"'Tain't no use—they're that tonguey that a play-actor couldn't touch 'em off. Mr Peyton, he's jest like a streak o' lightning; and Miss Phillis, she's more so—she's a streak o' greased lightning; and you might plate a fellow as thick with non-conductors as your work-basket is with willar twigs, she'd scorch him every time."

In spite of the confidence which existed between Bourke and his guest, when they were alone they talked of any other subject rather than the two young ladies who at this juncture formed so important an element in their lives. To a looker-on this reticence might have appeared suspicious, but it never so struck the men themselves.

It is a very odd thing, but none the less true, that except a man has a sister whom he is anxious to see married, the fact that any acquaintance is

likely to fall in love with her seldom enters his mind. In the present instance, if Maurice had thought, he would have dismissed the idea with the simple reflection that Bourke would never be insane enough to dream of the thing; he must know Georgia and her ambitions and tastes to well.

But just at the close of that first September fortnight, Maurice had his eyes opened to such an extent that more than he wondered at his friend's folly; he marvelled at his own blindness, quite forgetting that he had been too much occupied with another young woman to think of his sister's possible adorers.

They were spending a *tête-à-tête* evening at the Den—an unusual thing for them to do; but Miss Grosvenor had over-fatigued herself by too long a ride, so Phillis French decided she was to go to bed directly after tea, and explicitly informed the young gentlemen that the pleasure of their society would not be desired at the Nest before the afternoon of the following day.

A shower came up about dusk, so the pair were obliged to remain indoors; but they managed to pass the hours pleasantly enough. They read a little, Denis played on his violin, and they talked an immensity, though less about horses and women than female novelists seem to think must inevitably be the case when a couple of men are doomed to a *tête-à-tête*.

They did reach the latter topic at length, *apropos* to a remark Peyton made concerning a

romance he was reading by snatches in the intervals of conversation.

"The plot is clumsily managed, and the leading idea absurd," he said, flinging down the volume. "How could you tell me it was worth wading through, Denis?"

"Because I thought so. The heroine is rather weak and shallow, but the hero is a fine fellow."

"I don't agree with you; and I think the young woman showed her one gleam of good sense in marrying the rival," returned Maurice. "At least, he had something substantial to offer in the way of settlements, and your hero had only his fine theories, and would have half starved her in order to carry them out."

A very warm, though perfectly good-natured, discussion ensued, and Maurice finally said, with great emphasis,—

"I know any fellow with a sister would feel inclined to break her neck if she acted otherwise than that girl did."

Nothing could be further from his thoughts than his own sister and the possibility of Bourke's accepting a personal application of the speech; though had he known anything about his friend's state of mind, he would have seen that he could not fail to do so.

Denis only replied by a somewhat constrained laugh, and Peyton, deeming the subject at an end, lapsed into a vague reverie far removed therefrom—a reverie roused by the sight of Phillis French's name on the fly-leaf of the

book. They both smoked for a while in silence, then Bourke said quietly, though with a faint quiver in his voice,—

"I suppose I am to consider that a warning. I had better not make a fool of myself over your sister. It is quite true—I knew it before."

"My sister!" exclaimed Peyton, coming out of his reflections with a start, and staring at his companion in astonishment. "I'm blest if I have the least idea what you mean!"

His surprise was so genuine that Denis perceived the utter gratuitousness of the confession his speech had held.

"I am sure I don't know what you meant, unless that was it," he said, colouring hotly. "We seem to have been talking at cross purposes."

"Well," returned Maurice, unable to resist a laugh, "you have spoken plainly enough, so that we needn't do so any longer at all events."

"I am always making an ass of myself!" cried Denis disconsolately.

"I doubt whether a woman, who heard you say that in reference to your being a little smitten with her, would consider the remark a compliment," said Maurice.

"Oh, hang it! you know what I mean—don't chaff!" retorted Bourke, rather impatiently. Then he began to laugh also, and added, "But there's no use my turning rusty with you because I have blundered out my little secret."

Peyton regarded him gravely enough now, and said, after a moment's hesitation,—

"Why, Denis, old man, do you mean to tell me you are really in earnest?"

"I didn't mean to tell you anything, but I have. However, it makes no difference. You will keep it to yourself, and I don't mind your knowing."

"You are positively sweet on Georgia?"

"That seems to me what is the matter," replied Bourke dryly. "Confound it—do stop looking so astonished!"

"I believe a fellow always is astonished when it is his own sister that another fellow likes," said Maurice, trying to hide his sudden dismay at the thought of what pain his friend might have to suffer if he indeed loved Georgia.

"And I suppose in this special instance you think it tolerably presumptuous on the other fellow's part," rejoined Denis.

"Don't talk rubbish!" cried Maurice. "No matter who the woman was, there could be no presumption for a man in your position—"

"My position is that of a Pennsylvanian farmer," interrupted Bourke. "We won't have any mistakes about that part of the business."

Maurice remained silent for a moment, then he said,—

"I want to ask you one question. You have had an opportunity during these last months to become better acquainted with the lady than

you could have done in years of meeting out in the world?"

"Yes; well?" questioned Bourke, for Maurice had paused.

"You understand that I am speaking just as I should if she were no relation of mine; so you will not be vexed?"

"Of course not. Drive on."

"Should you say then, from your knowledge of her character, that the young woman would be likely to accept the situation as you put it?"

"I should say nothing could be more unlikely," Bourke replied with composure. "All the same, if she were genuinely fond of a man she has pluck enough to do so."

"An ambitious girl, brought up with the most extravagant habits; accustomed to change—living on excitement?"

"Just so!"

"And you actually propose to ask her to give up these things which have been the end and aim of her life?"

"Halt again. I don't think I propose to ask her anything. I only stumbled into telling you about myself and my own feelings."

"I believe she fancies you are soft on her pretty friend," said Peyton.

"She did at one time; I doubt if she does now," returned Denis. "And what is more, she thought it a great shame there should be any possibility of her pretty friend's falling a victim to such a heavy, awkward lout."

"Oh, nonsense!—a man born and bred a gentleman."

"Ah, but she only considered me a half-educated farmer, born to the position she found me in, and she stuck to that idea as long as she could. You need not exclaim; I saw how she felt; it was natural enough too."

Maurice rose, and began to walk slowly up and down the room, not knowing what to say, and feeling each instant more disturbed on his companion's account. Bourke pulled a sheet of paper towards him, commenced drawing mouths and noses, and soon fell to work upon a female head, which gradually resolved itself into a very fair likeness of Georgia Grosvenor.

At length Maurice paused in front of the table and said,—

"Since we have begun to talk freely we may as well go on."

Denis nodded; laid his pipe aside, and whistled softly while continuing his work.

"It's deuced awkward after all," exclaimed Peyton, resuming his promenade. "However, I was to put the fact of my relationship to her out of the question."

"Exactly; and that accomplished, what do you want to say to me?" Bourke asked.

"Why, if you like her enough—if you want to ask her to marry you—then I should consider it reasonable to explain how matters really stand on the other side of the water, and tell her what the future must bring."

"I don't propose to be reasonable," said Denis, suspending his pencil, and regarding his sketch with a critical air.

"It would be odd if you did!" retorted Maurice, half compassionate, half vexed. "You are an absurd sort of Don Quixote, you know. A fellow who gives up his shekels just from a romantic whim—"

"Stow that, else you'll make me wish I'd allowed you to believe as you did at first, that I had dropped the money on the turf. You promised never to breath a word—remember that!"

"Of course I sha'n't tell her! But I confess I don't see what you propose to yourself."

"I propose to live here, do my work, make myself as useful and as contented as I can," replied Bourke.

"But, my dear fellow, you could not expect a girl brought up in what we call society, to consent to bury herself alive with you in this blessed old farm."

"How, if I were a large landed proprietor—doing on a big scale what I am on a little one?"

"That would be different."

"Not a bit! If a woman could take no interest in my plans on their present basis, she could not simply because the sphere was enlarged, and the consequence would be great unhappiness to me."

"Well, Denis, my advice is to put Georgia Grosvenor out of your head. There, that is

frank enough, or the devil is in it. And you understand, dear old boy, I only say this because I like you better than any man I know. All the same, I regard you as a kind of lunatic—I reserve that right."

"I can't put her out of my head or my heart either," Denis answered slowly, pushing the paper aside, and leaning back in his chair, with his hands clasped behind his neck. "Nothing could be more improbable than that Miss Grosvenor has ever dreamed of caring a rush about me. It is still more absurdly and outrageously improbable, that she should ever reach a point where she would care enough to feel that accepting a share in my life was not a sacrifice too great ever to contemplate."

"And in that case?"

"Why, that ends the matter. If I were a Crœsus, my plans would not be changed—simply enlarged."

"Oh, bother your general brotherhood, and fighting for impossible millenium ideas!" cried Peyton, in a tone half irritated, half admiring." "It's all rubbish, you know; though when you get the steam on, you make one half forget the fact."

"They are ideas I am not likely to relinquish, Maurice, and even if I marry, my wife must be certain in advance that she can not only sympathise but help."

"My dear boy, you will have to wait for some young women of the future—say three or four hundred years or so."

"I don't know that. Now, there's Miss Grosvenor—if she really loved a man."

"A good girl—a splendid girl—but too clever to let her heart run away with her head. You have heard her admit frankly, over and over, how worldly she is."

"I have heard; but I think she is very tired of the life in which she has been brought up."

"Oh, every body talks that stuff about the emptiness of the world; but the aspect of affairs would change if it came to giving up position and luxury, and I am acquainted with no woman who requires more of both than the young lady in question."

"Yet how thoroughly she enjoys her stay here."

"Because it is a new experience. Tell her she had to stop, and she would go out of her senses in a week. Come now, how much do you suppose she spends a year on her dress?"

"I've very little idea of such things. She has wonderful taste, but simple, I should say. She is almost always in white, with bits of lace and what—you—call it—embroidery."

"Each bit of which costs God knows what! It must all be of the finest quality, and everything in the same style."

"Oh!" ejaculated Denis. "Now I understand why P. French laughed when I spoke of Miss Grosvenor's extreme simplicity."

"Miss Grosvenor has four thousand a-year—dollars you understand, not pounds, and it

takes two-thirds of the amount to pay her dressmaker's bills, Don Quixote!"

"Oh!" Denis once more ejaculated, then he began again to whistle softly, contemplating his sketch as he did so.

"Miss Grosvenor," pursued Maurice, "has been brought up to marry a millionaire—she has a fact about liking him, which has caused her hitherto to throw away chances in a rather reckless fashion—but she will undoubtedly do the thing at last."

"Find some millionaire she likes?" asked Denis calmly, as he wrote a few lines under the portrait, only to efface them directly after.

"Marry one at all events."

"She certainly ought to do so, if she means to remain faithful to her creeds," said Denis, and while speaking he pushed the sketch under a large book that lay on the table.

Maurice said to himself,—

"He can't be very deeply hit, else he could not be so confoundedly cool about it. I suppose Georgia has talked blank verse until he really tried to persuade himself that she was his ideal woman—able to devote her life to the helping on his aprocryphal millenium; fancy Georgia at that work. But she must not risk hurting him too much; he's the best fellow in the world, and I shall give my lady a little hint. She has a conscience, I will say for her—an unusual thing for the creature called a fine lady, to possess—but she has one."

Presently the clock struck.

"Midnight!" Bourke exclaimed. "Pretty hours for the country—for a working man especially. Politeness aside—I am going to bed. I suppose it would have been just as well, Maurice, for me not to have blundered into this talk; still, I am not sorry."

"If I could have liked you better than I did before, I think this would have made me—that's all I can say," replied Peyton.

"Quite enough, old man! Luckily there will be no occasion for you to expostulate with the lady. She is not likely to run the risk of committing any folly where I am concerned."

"Whatever she did I should hold my tongue," said Maurice.

"Good Lord! Imagine—only human imagination can't go so far; that she learned to care enough for me to give up her life, as worldly people understand the word, for my sweet sake—wouldn't you take out a commission of lunacy at once?"

"Oh no! I might tell her that I could not decide whether she was doing herself or you the greater injustice, but I should say no more; indeed, she would not allow me."

"Fortunately, you will not be tried," returned Denis with a little laugh; "all this talk is a pure waste of fancy."

"Now, there is money," continued Peyton; "if I wanted to give her ever so much, she would not have it. True, a fellow never has a

superabundance, even with a rent-roll that goes as far as mine into the thousands; but I am not quite a pig. I'd have liked when I reached my majority to increase her income."

"What the deuce are you talking about this sort of thing for?" Denis broke in, rather roughly.

"Just to show you how peculiar Georgia is," Maurice answered quietly. "Give her a lump outright I could not, according to the terms of my father's will. It seems he was jealous of the idea of my pretty little mother's marrying again. I believe her second husband had loved her when she was a girl, and he stated distinctly that if she did, not a penny was to be hers after I grew up, except what I chose to give her, and he expressly forbade my giving anything to her children, if she had any. Georgia heard about all those unjust conditions from the aunt; I think she would starve sooner than touch a farthing that had ever belonged to him."

"Quite right!" exclaimed Bourke, with suddenly flashing eyes, while a smile softened his mouth.

"However, one day or another she will marry so well that she will not need it," pursued Peyton.

"No doubt," said Denis; "we have already agreed upon that point."

"Hitherto, she has had no necessity for thinking—she has enough to be independent of the aunt, who, by the way, only possesses a life-

interest in her husband's estate, and she's had the bringing up of a young princess."

While he spoke Bourke had been lighting the candles.

"I must close the shutters," he said abruptly; "I remember we sent Patrick to bed hours ago."

They went upstairs together; as they paused to say good-night, Maurice grasped his friend's hand and shook it warmly.

"You are the best fellow in the world!" cried he. "I wish—I wish you had millions, and were not Don Quixote."

"Thanks!" said Bourke, laughing. "Sleep well. I mean to, for I am awfully tired."

END OF VOL. I.

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